

**Beyond Dialogue - An exploration of the
Musalaha: Curriculum of Reconciliation model
of interfaith dialogue with relevance for the UK
context.**

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Chester for the degree of Doctor of Professional Studies in Practical Theology

By

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All quotations from the Bible are from the *New International Version* (1979), London, United Kingdom: Hodder and Stoughton.

All quotations from the Qur'an are from Ali, A. (1999). *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*. Beltsville, Maryland: Amana Publications., unless indicated otherwise.

Abstract: Philip J. Rawlings. 'Beyond Dialogue' - An exploration of the Musalaha: Curriculum of Reconciliation model of interfaith dialogue with relevance for the UK context.

Issues concerning the integration of migrant communities into United Kingdom society have once again become the subject of national debate, with the publication of the Casey Review in December 2016. In the aftermath of terrorist incidents in Manchester and London, as well as the 2016 Referendum vote for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union, the reported rise in racially motivated hate crimes and an increase in both antisemitism and Islamophobia, the necessity of developing healthy relationships between communities is imperative. When considering the question of whether segregation is on the increase or not Cantle and Kaufman conclude that while minority ethnic communities are dispersing there is significantly less mixing with the 'White British' communities, who seem to be withdrawing from mixed areas. The need for integration is vital. This research starts with the premise that religion is part of the solution, not a part of the problem.

This qualitative research explores ethnographically the process of interfaith dialogue, by participant observation of three different groups over a five-year period, with intense reflection over the last three years. These groups were made up of Muslims and Christians, and Hindus in one group, all of whom had a deep personal faith in their respective religions. Using Salim Munayer's *Musalaha Six-stage Cycle of Reconciliation*, which was pioneered in the Israel-Palestine context of 25 years of dialogue practice among Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians, the research adapts and builds on this model, for use in interfaith dialogue, developing a fresh definition of 'interfaith dialogue' and a method of interfaith dialogue appropriate for the UK context.

The thesis makes three main contributions to academic knowledge. First, it presents a new definition and fresh approach to interfaith dialogue with relevance for the UK context, which is particularly relevant for devout believers in their respective religions, to stand alongside other models. Second, the

results of the research identify a list of fourteen key themes, including identity, faith and reconciliation, which deserve further analysis. The research methods indicated that there are many more issues that, with further analysis, might be profitably explored. Third, that following the six-stage cycle the path to reconciliation, although remaining hard, is nevertheless achievable, especially for those whose faith provides the motivation and drive to engage at depth with the other.

Summary of Portfolio

The four assignments in my portfolio that preceded this thesis built upon my research agenda, Christian engagement with Islam in the UK, in stage one of the DProf programme, culminating in the research proposal which led into the thesis in stage two.

The year 1 *Literature Review* (TH8002) considered the state of Islam in the UK, its background, tensions and some of the issues facing the future.

Mapping the development of 'British Islam' since the Second World War, giving a historical perspective, which develops out of the early migration through significant events, such as Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, leading to an increasing separate Muslim identity, asking the question 'what is a British Muslim?' The review then considers the growing Muslim engagement in the political and civic life in the UK, before reflecting on the work of Tariq Ramadan who shines a light on some of the issues facing British Islam, such as the role of women, traditions and liberation, medical issues, and ecology. The varied responses of Muslims in the UK are explored, raising questions that later are considered in the thesis concerning segregation, integration, assimilation and radicalisation.

The *publishable article* (TH8003) drew on my experience as the Church of England Interfaith Officer in Oldham, Greater Manchester. The appointment was in response to the 'Race Riots' of May 2001, which produced reports from David Ritchie and Ted Cante. The so-called *Cante Report* has been formative in the development of the government policy of *Community Cohesion*. The article reflected on the changes in Oldham in the ten years since the report, asking questions concerning lack of integration and 'ghettoisation' and the demographic movement in the Muslim communities, issues concerning the white British response, and future trends and concerns.

Reflection on Practice (TH8004) provided the opportunity to consider my interfaith job in Oldham, which would provide the dialogue groups for the

research. It asked questions about how I would keep a record of the engagement opportunities between Christians and Muslims and especially my own role as researcher, participant and facilitator.

The *research proposal* (TH8005) developed out of a chance meeting with Salim Munayer, director of the *Musalaha* project, based in Israel/Palestine. Experiencing a growing frustration with the different methods of interfaith dialogue that I had engaged with, I was looking for a new model that would develop deeper relationships between people of genuine faith in their religion. Musalaha provided such a model, but it needed adaptation for the UK context. The proposal considers qualitative research of an ethnographical nature which asks questions concerning what is dialogue and where does it lead – reconciliation?

Introduction

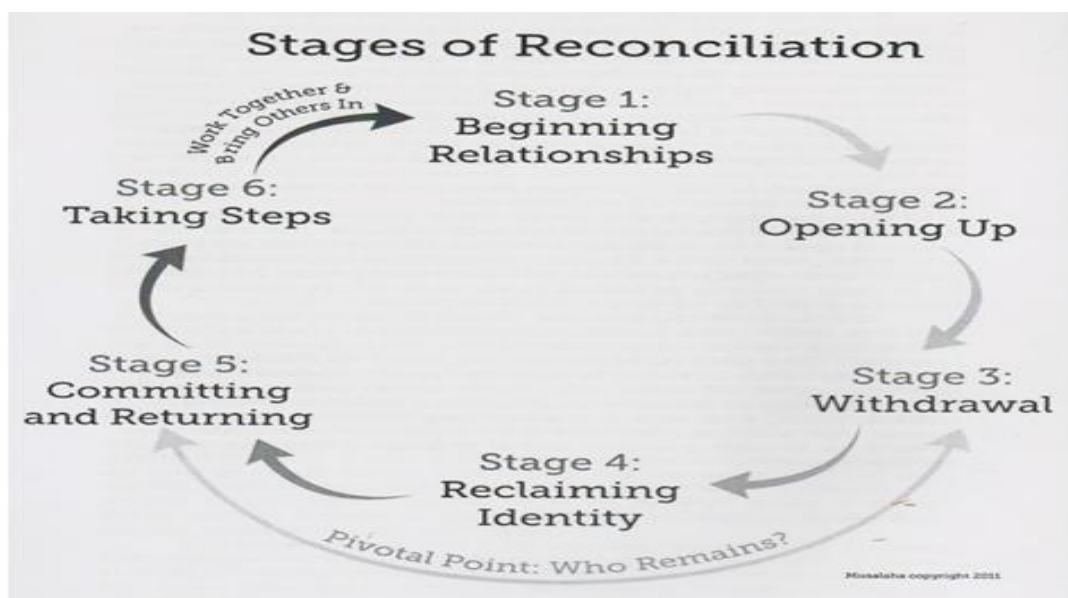
I think one of the advantages of interfaith dialogue because... you know people ... we're not rubbishing each other's faith, we know differences, we don't agree with each other on major issues, but we come and meet each other with a huge amount of respect for each other. (Christian member of Turkish Dialogue Group – session 8).

Background

The need for honest, respectful dialogue between practising members of different faiths is as important now as it has ever been. As I write this introduction, it is three weeks after the worst terrorist atrocity to hit Manchester on 22 May 2017, in which 22 victims died and over 100 were injured. Within two weeks, three terrorists killed eight and injured over 50 near London Bridge on 3 June 2017. This followed a similar recent attack by a lone terrorist on the Houses of Parliament in which four people died, including a Police Officer, and over 50 were injured. These simply being the most recent in a litany of such attacks in the West, dating back to the end of the last century, the most notorious being the New York attack on 9 September 2001 (9/11) and the London attacks on the underground and bus on 7 July 2005. Similar attacks have been experienced in France, Spain, and the Netherlands, as well as in the USA and the Middle East. Such attacks are often portrayed as religiously motivated, giving credence to Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* theory (Huntington, 1996), which posits a hypothesis that people's cultural and religious identities will provide the main source of conflict in the post-Cold War world. Dividing the world into nine major 'civilizations', Huntington argues that civilizational conflicts are "particularly prevalent between Muslims and non-Muslims" (p. 207f). This is in sharp contrast to the majority view within Muslim communities in the UK that speak of Islam as a 'Religion of Peace'. It is

evident that worldwide Islam faces a crisis (Allawi, 2009), with countries like Syria and Yemen in the midst of bitter intra-religious civil wars.

It is my firm conviction that while religious allegiances can give strong influences to provoke violence, people of devout faith actually provide at least a significant part of the solution to many of the issues faced in our world. The Musalaha model was developed by Salim Munayer, with its six-stage cycle of reconciliation pioneered in the Israel-Palestine context initially as an intra-faith exercise. For over 25 years Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians were taken into the Judean desert to engage in dialogue, considering some of the most challenging issues of arguably the intractable historic dispute. The six-stage cycle of reconciliation developed out of this interaction. Over recent years Musalaha has begun interfaith activities, although these are less developed and extensive. Munayer is particularly indebted to the 'Faith-Based Reconciliation' (Cox, 2011) of Brian Cox, which he has incorporated into his model in the interfaith context (interview with Salim Munayer p.81). However for the purpose of this research it is the Musalaha six-stage cycle of reconciliation which will be the model considered. This research asks how the Musalaha six-stage cycle of reconciliation might be relevant for interfaith dialogue, in the UK context.



(Munayer, 2011, p. 20)

The Aims

This research will:

1. Review the 'multicultural' context in the UK, asking how the present circumstances arose.
2. Consider interfaith dialogue, seek a fresh definition, and review the practices currently in operation.
3. Explore a fresh model of dialogue with three research groups, asking what this model produces and how it might add value to existing models.
4. Advocate a new model of interfaith dialogue that will complement existing models, where in certain contexts it will provide a more suitable model.

Principles and gaps

The study will follow the principles of Practical Theology, which is distinctive from other theological disciplines in that its beginning point is human experience (Swinton & Mowat, 2006, p. 5). While the classical definition of theology is 'faith seeks understanding' (Anselm's definition – *fides quaerens intellectum*), Ballard and Pritchard characterise Practical Theology as 1) a descriptive, phenomenological activity, "not asking truth questions but the historical and socio-psychological questions of the human race"; 2) a normative "critical prophetic activity calling the community of faith back to its essential commitment, challenging it in word and deed"; 3) critical activity "on the frontiers of faith...concerned with questions of truth, its own and other people's truth"; 4) apologetic activity "concerned to work out the implications, intellectual and practical, of the Christian faith" (Ballard & Pritchard, 2006, p. 13). This research considers relationships between religious people who are exploring their faith commitment and its implications. It asks questions of genuine faith as a means of confronting some of the social issues of our time, critically examining how dialogue can aid the development of healthy

engagement between people of different religions, while maintaining their religious integrity.

The research will be qualitative and ethnographic, considering the relationships between participants involved in three research groups (chapter 3). An important dimension will be consideration of the autoethnographic implications (chapter 6) of such interfaith dialogue, as the responses and journey of the researcher himself are explored. Coming from an Evangelical/Charismatic background, interfaith dialogue might be considered to sit uneasily with the exclusivist particularity often associated with this tradition. Consideration of the journey the researcher travelled and the different issues wrestled with during this research could provide a road-map for others, possibly from a similar tradition, to follow in their own interfaith engagement.

Origins

The origins of this research lie in my experience of frustration with existing models of interfaith dialogue (see chapter 2). After more than 15 years of interfaith engagement frustration emerged over what seemed to be a lack of depth in relationships between members of different religious communities in the local context. This birthed a personal desire to explore models that might enable such relationships to develop. This research fills a gap, for as indicated in chapter 1, there is an urgent imperative to develop interfaith relationships that allow participants to maintain integrity while forging friendships of significant depth. The model being explored in this research facilitates such relationships, and the research explores its effectiveness. While there are several models of interfaith dialogue being used in the UK (chapter 2), the Musalaha model is particularly effective with participants who have a depth of faith in their religion; and, as far as I know, has not previously been used in the UK context.

The structure of the thesis

'Dialogue' is a concept receiving increasing interest, with a growing body of understanding of the processes involved. This thesis will explore different models and will develop its own definition emerging out from the research, which is explored in the conclusion (chapter 7).

Although the formal research took place over a three-year period, the wealth of experience gained comes from a significantly longer period. Two of the three research groups had been meeting for over six years and continue to meet. The experience of interfaith dialogue contributing to this research extends beyond these three research groups, to other groups starting more than 12 years ago, and a number of significant personal relationships have enriched my cross-cultural experience and given insight into the interfaith dialogue process.

The analysis of the research (chapters 4 and 5) based on a Thematic Networks approach gives an indication of the process of the six-stage cycle. The analysis will reflect the depth of engagement, the topics covered and the significance of particular events. It will identify decisive moments; these I call 'epiphany moments', where participants experience an understanding which had previously eluded them. It was these decisive events that enabled the process to move on significantly from one stage to another. They presented participants with challenges to re-examine their identity, break down barriers and risk stepping into the unknown, which for some was a step too far. However, the desired outcome of this process is reconciliation, my definition of which is arrived at in chapter 7.

Chapter 1 Setting the scene: the nature of ‘the state we live in’

(Hutton, 1996).

How did Britain’s present ‘multicultural society’ come about?

This chapter sets the scene and provides the context into which the research dialogue groups developed. It focuses on the development of Muslim communities in Britain since 1945, and the response of the UK government to issues raised.

Although the first British mosque was established in Liverpool by prosperous solicitor, Abdullah (William Henry) Quilliam, who had converted to Islam during a trip to Morocco in 1887, and the first purpose-built mosque was established in Woking, Surrey in 1889, the Muslim presence in Britain leading up to the Second World War was limited to one thousand British Muslims scattered about the country and 10,000 Muslims from overseas (Lewis, 2002, p. 12f). Humayun Ansari describes the situation for Muslims in Britain at that time:

Muslim communities ... were small and operated in a relatively hostile environment ... all needed to adjust and ... make accommodations with the wider society ... Religious institutions in this period therefore gave expression to the cultural and ethnic identities and community life (Ansari, 2004, p. 144).

There were ‘Lascars’; Yemeni sailors who had jumped ship in ports like Cardiff, Liverpool and South Shields (Lewis, 2002, p. 11; Hopkins & Gale, 2009, p.2), with even a small community in Eccles, Salford, having arrived via the Manchester Ship Canal.

The post-Second World War labour shortage led to the invitation to Commonwealth countries for factory workers (Hopkins & Gale, 2009, p. 2), especially in the cotton and woollen mills of Lancashire and Yorkshire. This post-1945 migration of Muslims to Britain can be divided into two main phases: 1945 to early 1970s and 1973 to the present. In the first phase, the post-war

capital investment and expansion strategy required many migrant workers. The invitation went out to former colonies, bringing responses from the British West Indies, Cyprus and the Indian sub-continent, many of whom had large Muslim populations. As an example of the growth in Britain due to immigration in this period, Philip Lewis describes the numbers of Britons of Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent in 1951 as 5,000, and in 1971 as 170,000, of whom 23.5% were born in the UK (Lewis, 2002, p. 15).

Initially, the migrant workers left their families and travelled with the sole purpose of making money to send home. Many of these migrants came from an area of Pakistani-controlled Kashmir, near the city of Mirpur (Ansari, 2004, p. 152). However, responding to alarm at the number of 'foreigners' entering Britain, in 1962 the Commonwealth Immigration Act transformed what had been temporary movements from the New Commonwealth to permanent settlement of migrants and their families (Lewis, 2002, p. 16-17). In the run-up to the Act, following its announcement in 1961, there was a rush to 'beat the ban' (Ansari, 2004, p. 158).

The second migration phase followed the Oil Crisis of 1973-4, which brought recession, reducing the need for migrant workers. However, the re-uniting of families and the movement of refugees and asylum seekers has seen Britain's migrant population continue to grow (Lewis, 2002, p. 22-3). The early 1970s brought a different kind of migration phenomenon, with large numbers of people from developing countries arriving as a result of involuntary or coerced migration. Political or religious persecution compelled Algerians, Egyptians, Iranians, Iraqis, Kurds, Libyans, Palestinians, Somalis and Turks to migrate. The increasing 'Africanisation' of East African former colonies culminated in 1972 when President Idi Amin expelled all Ugandan Asians in his country. Thus by 1981, 155,000 South Asians of East African origin had settled in Britain, of whom about 15% were Muslims (Lewis, 2002, p. 18). Many of these forced migrants settled in Leicester and subsequently the city has prospered. The 2011 UK Census indicated the Muslim population to be 2,786,635, 4.4% (Office of National Statistics i) of the total population. The significant majority

of Muslims in the UK live in England: 2,660,116 (5.02% of the population), 76,737 Muslims live in Scotland (1.45%) (National Records of Scotland), 45,950 in Wales (1.50%)(Office of National Statistics ii), and 3,832 in Northern Ireland (0.21%)(Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency).

How have these migrant communities developed over the last 30 years?

The increasing strength of Muslim countries, especially some of the major oil exporters, saw the beginning of a growing Muslim influence worldwide (Ahmad & Sardar, 2012, p. 2). In the UK, events in Bradford over halal meat in schools (Lewis, 2002, p. 148-150), closely followed by the Salman Rushdie *Satanic Verses* controversy (Weller, 2009, p.11-16), enabled Asian and Muslim communities to develop their own identity and strength (Gilliat-Ray, 2010, p. 109; Lewis, 2002, p. 153-160; Ahmad & Sardar. 2012, p. 2).

The protests against Salman Rushdie reinforced, for many outside the Muslim communities, a view of Islam as anti-Western and anti-democratic (Khan, 2000, pp. 29-43). However, far from holding a radical stance on Islam, most Muslims protesting in the UK came from a South Asian background and practised a more 'sufi' expression of Islam, often belonging to the Barelvi school of thought (Lewis, 2002, p. 153-154), which emphasises the spiritual nature of Islam and its devotional worship (Bowen, 2014, p. 115-134). The portrayal of the prophet of Islam in *the Satanic Verses* was extremely hurtful to the Muslim community. The whole incident illustrated the cultural gap between the Muslim immigrant communities and the rest of the UK population, for in calling for a ban on the novel and for a change in the blasphemy laws, the Muslim population were unable to convince the non-Muslim majority of the validity of their case. There was little sympathy towards the Muslims' case, illustrating the lack of constructive engagement between them and British political, social and cultural institutions (Lewis, 2002, p.159; Abbas, 2005, p.69-72). It provided a sobering warning, as Lord Scarman put it:

In an increasingly plural society such as that of modern Britain, it is necessary not only to respect the differing beliefs, feelings and

practices of all but to protect them from vilification, ridicule and contempt (Ansari, 2004, p.233).

While an increasing Muslim confidence had been growing globally, this incident succeeded in moving forward the development of a Muslim identity in Britain (Modood, 2005, p.103-112). The shift from ethnicity to religion as a major identity signifier was significant (Cesari & McLoughlin, 2005, p.56). The previous description of 'Black' was no longer appropriate, as the predominantly Christian West Indian community had no interest in that issue; neither was the category 'Asian' helpful, as many Hindus and Sikhs cared little for the honour of a prophet of Islam. So, the label 'Muslim' became the first religious category in secular Britain. Rushdie describes this as

...a pivotal moment in the forging of a British Muslim identity and political agenda. I did not fail to note the ironies: a secular work of art energized powerful communalist forces, 'Muslim' instead of 'Asian' (Rushdie, 2005).

Jenkins considers that the youths "growing up in the 1980s and 1990s found such assertiveness both natural and attractive, and in some cases, they criticized the political passivity of their parents" (Jenkins, 2007, p.132).

Although British Muslim identity was in the process of becoming a reality, many Muslims emerged from the Rushdie protests feeling isolated, convinced their core values had been violated, and hence had little willingness to reach political accommodation with Britain's apparently secular establishment (Hopkins & Gale, 2009, p. 210-211; Ansari, 2004, p. 236). The 1990s saw the growth of Muslim political identity and strength (Geaves, Gabriel, Haddad & Smith, 2004, p. 117-120), both within Britain and especially internationally, and increased globalised communications meant that Muslim issues in any part of the world became concerns for British Muslims, for example, protests in Pakistan concerning the Charlie Hebdo cartoons, which I witnessed in Lahore, or the response to the "publication of provocative cartoons of the Prophet in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten in 2005" (Bowen, 2014, p. 133).

Riots in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in May 2001 brought to prominence the frustration of some Muslim communities in the North of England. The Cantle Report, commissioned after the 'race riots' by the then Home Secretary, David Blunkett, highlighted that "the towns showed a depth of polarisation around segregated communities living a series of parallel lives" (Cantle, 2001, p.9-12). Cantle's second point might be considered prophetic in the light of the 7 July 2005 attacks in London, as he considered that "further violence is likely if government, police and community leaders fail to break this polarisation" (Cantle, 2001, p.9- 12). In the light of this polarisation it is worth asking how British Muslim identity has translated into an engagement with civil society.

What involvement has there been in mainstream political life, and in the democratic processes?

The representation of Muslims in mainstream British political parties has traditionally been almost exclusively with the Labour Party. The 2015 General Election elected 13 Muslim members to the House of Commons, up from 8 in 2010, which, included eight women, the first Scottish National Party (SNP) Muslim woman MP (Tasmina Ahmed-Sheikh). Of these MPs nine were Labour, three Conservative and one SNP. All six of the new intake were born and educated in Britain and had professional careers. Three Bangladeshi-heritage MPs were elected to work alongside the Pakistani-heritage MPs. There are 17 Muslim members of the House of Lords, and five members of the European Parliament. In 2002 the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) considered there to be "a strong case of underrepresentation of ethnic minority candidates (including Muslims) in political parties" (Ali & O'Cinneide, 2002); and following the 2015 elections Ahmed J Versi, editor of the *Muslim News*, commented, "It is great that there are more Muslim MPs elected than ever before. However, the House of Commons still does not reflect the diversity of the population".

The Iraq War caused considerable soul-searching for traditionally Labour-supporting Muslims, and in the 2003 Local Government Elections a number of

groups, including the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) (Phillips, 2008), led vociferous campaigns asking Muslims not to vote for Labour in opposition to the government's stance on the war in Iraq. The Respect Party started by George Galloway (Abbas, 2007, p. 285-286; Bowen, 2014, p. 108) in September 2004, largely on an anti-war platform, attracted many Muslims, notably young Muslim women who found they had a voice, such as Salma Yacoob (Bowen, 2014, p. 96), a local councillor in Birmingham, and a former leader of the party. Galloway was elected MP for Bethnal Green and Bow in 2005 and then stood for the Poplar and Limehouse constituency in 2007, where he came third. In 2012, he convincingly won the Bradford West by-election, only to lose it in 2015; and again in 2017 he failed to gain the Manchester Gorton seat.

While mainstream political involvement by Muslims has steadily increased over the years, so has the number of Muslim organisations claiming to represent various factions within the communities (Bowen, 2014). Not only are Muslim communities divided by religious affiliation, but also by country of heritage. Whilst at least 75% of Pakistani immigrants have come from Mirpur (Irna & Smith, 1997) in Azad Kashmir, there are also significant communities from Sylhet in Bangladesh and Gujarat State in India.

'Multiculturalism' developed in response to the different cultural, religious and ethnic communities making their home in the UK (Cesari & McLoughlin, 2005, p. 45). This has been defined as "the modern way of living that requires the ability ... to understand, respect and interact with members of different cultures, races, ethnic groups and nationalities" (Sitaram & Prosser, 1998, p. 2). The advent of the 'New Labour' Government of 1997 and the events of 9/11 and 7/7 shaped 'multicultural' and then 'community cohesion' policies. Multiculturalism developed (Modood, 2007, p. 2) in Britain not initially as a political movement, but as a response to the movement of people into the country, and hence it has been reactive, seeking to first understand and then shape the changes in society. However, Modood comments that,

...the political idea of multiculturalism – the recognition of group difference within the public sphere of laws, policies, democratic discourses and the terms of a shared citizenship and national identity – while sharing something in common with the political movementshas a narrower focus (Modood, 2007, p. 2).

He recognises that both ‘the consequences of immigration and the struggles of marginalised groupscannot be entirely separated from each other’ (Modood, 2007, p. 2). Political multiculturalism, as Modood describes it, draws on the liberal philosophy of John Rawls (1971), although it was Will Kymlicka in his books *Liberalism, Community and Culture* (1989), and *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995), who first gave definitive statements in relation to political multiculturalism. Different models of multiculturalism emerged. For example, assimilation and integration are two rival models, where assimilation describes the process affecting newly settled communities; they are seen as one-way, with the newcomers expected to disturb society as little as possible. However, integration assumes a two-way process, which works differently for different groups. It means that different communities and individuals cannot be accommodated according to a single plan and that they will be changed and will change the society into which they have integrated (Modood, 2007, p. 49).

The New Labour government from 1997 gave an emphasis to the ‘plural and dynamic character of British society’ by speaking of ‘Cool Britannia’, of ‘rebuilding Britain’, of Britain being a ‘young country’ (Tony Blair), a ‘mongrel’ nation (Gordon Brown) and a ‘chicken tikka masala-eating nation’ (Robin Cook)’ (Modood, 2007, p. 10).

It was the events of 11 September (9/11) in 2001 in New York and Washington, however, when ‘Muslim terrorists’ destroyed the twin towers of the World Trade Center, which brought multiculturalism into the spotlight. This was followed in London on 7 July 2005 (7/7) when British-born suicide bombers caused explosions in three Underground trains and one bus, killing

over fifty people. Two weeks later (21/7) an attempt to set off more bombs in London was aborted. Other European cities, notably Madrid in 2004, suffered similar bombings, although not by its own citizens. By 2004, civic society institutions, usually centre-left, were advertising seminars with titles such as 'Is Multiculturalism Dead?' (The Guardian, 8 April 2001).

Some have argued that 'multiculturalism has led to social fragmentation and entrenched social divisions' (Malik, 2007, Policy Exchange 2007); others, especially left-wing critics, consider it a distraction from the class struggle and socio-economic disparities or even a scam on the part of global capitalism (Barry, 2001; Hansen, 2006; Sivanadan, 1982); others even blame it for international terrorism (Gove, 2006, Phillips, 2006). However, the events of 7/7 and 21/7 brought a crisis of confidence in political multiculturalism policies, due to the fact that most of those involved in the incidents on 7/7 and 21/7 were born and/or brought up in Britain, the country that had given refuge from persecution and poverty and had facilitated freedom of worship. In response, political philosophers and sociologists developed the concept of 'interculturalism' and 'intercultural dialogue' (Cantle, 2012; Gagnon & Lacovino, 2007; Emerson, 2011; Meer, N., Modood, T., & Zapata-Barrero, R., 2016), which has gained some popularity, especially in Europe, where 2008 was designated 'European Year of Intercultural Dialogue'; the European Commission's stated aim was to encourage "all those ... in Europe to explore the benefits of our rich cultural heritage and opportunities to learn from different cultural traditions".

Interculturalism is considered by some as an updated version of multiculturalism. However, Meer and Modood identify four distinctive characteristics of interculturalism.

First it is something greater than coexistence, being allegedly more geared towards interaction and dialogue than multiculturalism. Second, it is conceived as something less 'groupist' or more yielding of synthesis than multiculturalism. Third, it is something more committed to a

stronger sense of the whole, in... societal cohesion and national citizenship. Finally, that where multiculturalism may be illiberal and relativistic, interculturalism is more likely to lead to criticism of illiberal practices (as part of the intercultural dialogue) (Meer & Modood, 2011, p. 3).

While political theorists debated cultural issues in the UK, two developments occurred in response to the events in May 2001 ('Race riots' in northern towns) and in July 2005 (7/7 bombings in London). Following the events in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham on 26-28 May 2001, with clashes between Asian youths, right-wing organisations and the Police, Ted Cantle was commissioned to produce a report (Cantle, 2001), in which his recommendations included:

- the towns showed a "depth of polarisation" around segregated communities living "a series of parallel lives".
- further violence is likely if government, police and community leaders fail to break this polarisation.
- an oath of national allegiance from immigrants might help future race relations. Politicians, community leaders and the media should promote "a meaningful concept of citizenship".
- at least 25% of places in single-faith schools, be they state or private, should be given to children of alternative backgrounds.
- Police should extend community policing initiatives and break drug networks in some no-go areas.
- local newspapers are criticised for publishing inflammatory material.
- where extremists are determined to stir up trouble, mutual ignorance of inward-looking communities can easily turn to fear (*The Guardian*, 11th December 2001).

Cantle has been credited for developing the concept of 'community cohesion' (Cantle, 2005) and has been influential in setting government policies. The definition of community cohesion evolved over six years, beginning with the

Cantle Report of 2001, following the May riots. In 2005 Cantle set up the Institute of Community Cohesion (iCoCo) to promote community cohesion and interculturalism. In 2006 the Independent Commission on Integration and Cohesion (ICIC) “was set up to explore how people in different communities and places in England were getting along” (Face to Face and Side by Side, 2008, p. 8) which produced its report *Our Shared Future* (2007), asserting “that the way in which relationships between people of different religions and beliefs developed over coming years would be important for integration and cohesion” (p.8). In 2008 ICIC produced:

Face to Face and Side by Side: A framework for partnership in our multi faith society to create more local opportunities for both face to face dialogue which supports a greater understanding of shared values as well as an appreciation of distinctiveness; and for side by side collaboration...’ (Face to Face and Side by Side, 2008, p. 8).

Face to Face and Side by Side settled on a definition of cohesion which is built on three foundations: people from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities; people knowing their rights and responsibilities; people trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly ... And three ways of living together: a shared future and sense of belonging; a focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity; strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds (Face to Face and Side by Side, 2008, p. 15).

In 2005 the New Labour government published the Prevention of Terrorism Act (HM Government, 2005), amidst much controversy, allowing the Home Secretary at the time, Charles Clarke, to impose ‘control orders’ on people who were suspected of involvement in terrorism, which, in some cases, may have derogated (opted out) from human rights. In April 2006, a High Court judge issued a declaration that Section 3 of the Act was incompatible with the right to a fair trial under Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights (High Court, 2006) and in December 2011, the Act was repealed by

Section 1 of the Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Act 2011. It seemed clear that the government lacked any coherent policy to combat terrorism.

In July 2011 the Coalition government (Conservatives and Liberal Democrats) inherited a strategy from the previous New Labour government and published its CONTEST strategy, “to reduce the risk to the UK and its interests overseas from terrorism”. The strategy continued to have four ‘workstreams’:

1. Pursue – to stop terrorist attacks; 2. Prevent – to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism; 3. Protect – to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack; 4. Prepare – to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack. (HM Government, 2011. p.5).

The most controversial of these ‘workstreams’ was the ‘Prevent’ agenda. Its aim was primarily to build resilience and promote cohesion. Many projects were commissioned with the aim to “deal directly with counter-terrorism ... to challenge terrorist ideology ... to provide support for vulnerable people through identification, referral and intervention...”(ibid p.32).

The Coalition government was keen not to repeat what it considered to be the mistakes of the previous New Labour government, that;

despite the fact that it is widely accepted that extremists are a tiny minority in Britain, the strategy frequently appeared to be trying to effect a substantial change in all Muslims’ attitudes (O’Toole, Jones & DeHanas, 2011, p. 2).

Another criticism of Prevent under New Labour was that local authorities were funded in proportion to the number of Muslim residents, and the money was directed into a wide variety of community initiatives, especially youth projects (Kundnani, 2009, p. 13-14). The effect of this was to frustrate non-Muslim organisations, who were denied public funds (Birt, 2009, p. 52-58). A personal

anecdote illustrates this, when a Hindu friend, reflecting on the money going into local Muslim projects, asked the question: “What do we have to do to receive government funding?” This former policy had entirely ignored far-right and other forms of extremism, which implied that only Muslims were of serious concern, and that generally they were ‘flawed citizens’ in need of alteration (Birt, 2011, p. 117-128). There was also widespread suspicion that the Prevent strategy was being used to gather information about Muslim communities (Kundnani, 2009, p. 15). In Birmingham, Project Champion, led by West Midlands Police Authority, that installed 216 closed circuit televisions (CCTV) and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR), in two strongly Muslim areas: Sparkbrook and Washwood Heath, backfired badly; it was eventually dismantled, after a campaign by citizens and residents groups.

The Coalition government published its revised ‘new’ Prevent report (2011), seeking to distance itself from the previous strategy. It emphasised the need to separate Prevent-funded activities from community cohesion (HM Government, p. 30). However, many of the same issues that plagued the previous Prevent strategy were found in the new report. O’Toole, Jones and DeHanas note that the ‘new’ Prevent report sought to tackle three concerns:

1. The perceived wastefulness of New Labour, with MPs and the Taxpayers’ Alliance asking for strict accountability of the way funds were spent. The Taxpayers’ Alliance maintained that “Skilled policing and robust intelligence are the most effective ways of tackling violent extremism...Funding projects carried out by community groups is a method that is doomed to failure” (The Taxpayers Alliance, 2009, p. 2).
2. The Centre for Social Cohesion (2010) asserted that not enough has been done to counter ‘radicalisation’ within public institutions.
3. Think tanks such as the Quilliam Foundation (2006) and Policy Exchange (Maher & Frampton, 2009) considered that Prevent actually “facilitated extremist views and radicalization by sanctioning partnership between government and Islamist organisations” (O’Toole, Jones & DeHanas, 2011, p. 6). David Cameron (2011), then Prime Minister, accused the previous government of associating with ‘non-violent

extremists' in order to combat 'violent extremists', comparing it to being "like turning to a right-wing fascist party to fight a violent white supremacist movement".

O'Toole, Jones and DeHanas reflect that neither strategy is working and conclude by asking, 'Can Prevent Ever Be Made to Work?' (p. 7).

While seeking to deal with issues of radicalisation facing the UK, a number of other issues concerning immigrant communities have been presented; for example; the grooming of vulnerable white girls by predominantly Asian-heritage men in Rochdale, Oxford and particularly, Rotherham, where the numbers involved and the ineffectiveness of the Local Authority and South Yorkshire Police led to a major inquiry led by Dame Louise Casey (HM Government, 2015). Another example was the murder of Fusilier Lee Rigby, outside his barracks in Woolwich, London, on 22 May 2013, by two Muslim converts of Nigerian background. These incidents, along with other attempted terrorist attacks, have increased the sense that 'Prevent' is not working.

In December 2016, the Casey Review was published, after a long delay. Dame Louise Casey had undertaken a review into integration and opportunity in isolated and deprived communities (Casey, 2016, p. 5). In her summary, she notes that "problems of social exclusion have persisted for some ethnic groups, and poorer White British communities in some areas are falling further behind" (p.7). While noting some progress, Casey is particularly concerned that "promoting integration and tackling social exclusion matters" (p.8):

Resilience, integration and shared common values and behaviours – such as respect for the rule of law, democracy, equality and tolerance – are inhibitors of division, hate and extremism. They can make us stronger, more equal, more united and able to stand as one nation (p.8).

She lists a number of concerns and makes recommendations:

- Issues of lack of English for some marginalised women;
 - Need for more social mixing – among young;
 - Employment for most socially isolated groups;
 - More weight on ‘British values’;
 - More advice for immigrants;
 - Introduction of an Integration oath;
 - Working to produce ‘integrated’ schools;
 - Stronger safeguarding for children being home schooled;
 - Rule of Law, equality and tolerance – enshrined in public life
- (Casey, 2016).

The Casey Review received immediate criticism; chief amongst them was the sense that Muslims were being blamed for lack of integration. Harun Khan, general secretary of the Muslim Council of Britain said: “We need to improve integration, and it needs to involve the active participation of all Britons, not just Muslims” (The Guardian, 5 December 2016). Professor Eric Kaufman, of Birkbeck College, University of London, “said that ‘white British avoidance’ is a ‘principal driver’ of segregation” (Huffington Post, 2016). Shaista Gohir, chair of the Muslim Women’s Network UK, while welcoming the report, comments: “We need a nuanced debate that looks at these hard questions that Casey raises but that also looks at the racism and xenophobia these communities face” (Shaista Gohir, 5 December 2016). While Sayeeda Warsi, a former communities minister, said the year-long study was unfair towards Muslim women and ‘out of date’, she felt that it had “some good bits, a few bad bits and a lot of confused bits”(Sayeeda Warsi, 5 December 2017). The issue of learning English, particularly for women, was generally welcomed, but, chief executive of Refugee Action, noted that funding for English courses had been slashed by more than half since 2009, stating that “[Refugees] are deeply frustrated by the lack of English language classes available” (Stephen Hale, 5 December 2017).

The Casey review was released while Ted Cantle was reviewing progress since his report following the 2001 'race riots'. He observes that:

Fourteen years ago, I reported the 'parallel lives' found in our Northern towns. Segregation in schools, workplaces and residential areas has hardly improved and in some cases have been further set back ... (Ted Cantle, 23 May 2016).

The Guardian reported Cantle as saying

There is more mixing in some parts of our society. But there is also ... segregation in workplaces ... that is driving more prejudice, intolerance, mistrust in communities (Ted Cantle, 23 May 2016).

A number of the recommendations made by Cantle in 2001, which were not acted upon, have been raised in the Casey review, such as the need for ethnically mixed schools, an integration oath and others.

This chapter has introduced many of the issues facing the UK at this time. It gives the context for interfaith engagement involved in this research. Two of the three research groups were based in Oldham, which was the subject of the Cantle Report and cited by the Casey Review. At the centre of this research is how people of devout faith – Muslims, Christians and Hindus – through honest and open relationships of genuine integrity can engage in ways that develop reconciliation between each other, as a means of living better lives.

The next chapter considers some models of interfaith dialogue with special emphasis on the Musalaha six-stage model of reconciliation, which is being explored in this thesis.

Chapter 2 Models of Interfaith Dialogue

Having considered the context for new communities, especially Muslims, in the UK, this chapter considers one of the main ways in which people of different culture and heritage relate to each other – dialogue. The chapter will summarise the growth in interest in dialogue and then consider four models used in different contexts, before exploring the Musalaha model, which is the subject of this thesis.

What is Dialogue?

Dialogue is becoming a more academic discipline where, for example, in 2013, the University of Keele set up a MA programme in Dialogue Studies, describing its underpinning context as:

...the need to understand and respond to the problems and challenges generated by the UK's diverse society. Cultural and religious diversity is capable of promoting a culturally rich, open-minded society able to draw on a wide range of perspectives in confronting social, economic and political challenges at local, national and international levels (Dialogue Studies).

In autumn 2013, the first edition of the *Journal of Dialogue Studies* was published by the Institute of Dialogue Studies, the academic arm of the Dialogue Society (The Dialogue Society), describing it as:

...meaningful interaction and exchange between people (often of different social, cultural, political, religious or professional groups) who come together through various kinds of conversations or activities with a view to increased understanding (Journal of Dialogue Studies, p. 2).

Interest in interfaith dialogue has been growing in the UK for over 70 years. Chief Rabbi Joseph H. Hertz and Archbishop William Temple founded the Council of Christians and Jews in 1942, with “the aim was for Jews and

Christians to meet together in local groups, to understand each other a little better and to recognise the humanity in the other” (Council of Christians and Jews). However, dialogue is becoming more popular in the multifaith context in the UK and this study will consider dialogue around interfaith engagement.

Although there are various definitions of ‘dialogue’, this research develops its own definition to embrace the model explored (see chapter 7). Much of the thinking and outworking of dialogue has come out of a religious context, though not exclusively. The ‘Four Principles of Dialogue’ were developed by the then British Council of Churches Committee for Relations with People of other Faiths in the 1980s. It was first published in 1981 and revised in 1983 as *Relations with People of Other Faiths: Guidelines for Dialogue in Britain*.

The four principles are that dialogue: 1... begins when people meet each other; 2... depends upon mutual understanding and mutual trust; 3... makes it possible to share in service to the community; 4... becomes the medium of authentic witness (British Council of Churches, 1983).

There are an increasing number of contexts where Christians, Muslims and those of other faiths meet, in formal and informal settings. Often, these encounters are called ‘dialogues’, although there may be little or no serious engagement taking place. As already expressed, such meetings can be a source of frustration for those wishing to develop serious engagement, and they can seem little more than tokenistic, symbolic occasions, where senior civic and religious leaders appear alongside each other, speaking pious clichés. While frustrating, such encounters provide a public face to the need to develop cooperation and inclusion. Questions to be asked are, where do these encounters lead and what long-lasting relationships do these meetings produce? They can open up opportunities for developing fruitful dialogue, but there needs to be a deliberate intentionality for that to be the case. This study will show that one of the keys to genuine dialogue is the mutual trust and respect which enables, on occasion, hard things to be exchanged within the bonds of trust and reciprocity.

This chapter considers five different models of interfaith dialogue, three of which are commonly used in 'dialogue': the 'Meetings for Better Understanding'; 'Scriptural Reasoning'; and the 'Dialogue Society'. Then the 'Reconciliation programme' pioneered by Brian Cox, will be considered, before exploring the six-stage cycle of the Musalaha project in Israel/Palestine in some depth. This thesis asks the question how relevant this Musalaha model is to the context in the UK.

First, we will consider some of the models of interfaith dialogue in practice in the UK. Since the events in New York of 2001 (9/11) and the London bombings of 2005 (7/7) there has been a growth in organisations that have sought to develop methods of engagement that would draw peoples of different faiths into positive relationships.

Meeting for Better Understanding:

The term 'Meeting for Better Understanding' (MBU) is the copyright term of the organisation 'a Passion for Life', a Christian organisation with an evangelistic motive for developing MBUs, describing itself as "a growing network of Bible believing partnerships and churches throughout the UK involved in sharing the life changing news of Jesus Christ" (A Passion for Life). However, despite the desire of 'Passion for Life' to keep the term MBU within their control, it has become the common name for any meeting where Christians and Muslims discuss topics which are of interest to either party. This was the term used by the Oldham Interfaith Forum, when I first worked in Oldham in 2011, to describe meetings that had been organised as a response to riots there in May 2001. It is also a term I have used frequently in other contexts. A 'Passion for Life', defines MBUs as:

.... NOT debates. Any public criticism of either the Muslim or Christian Religion is not encouraged since that would lead to arguments which are not productive ... [o]ur aim is not for either side to compromise its message or mix the two faiths. MBUs simply promote a mutual

understanding of what Muslims and Christians believe (A Passion for Life).

Guidelines given by 'A Passion for Life' suggest that each speaker has 20 minutes to speak on a topic, followed by 45 minutes for questions and answers. A moderator is chosen to ensure that the guidelines are followed. Following the formal meeting, refreshments are served. It is anticipated that there will be a series of such meetings believe (A Passion for Life).

Several theological and social topics are suggested: the unity of God, the Bible and the Qur'an, who and what are prophets, various characters (Abraham, Adam, Mary ...), marriage and divorce, family life and many others. It is suggested that the meetings can be held in mosques, churches, neutral halls or private homes, and they make the point that halal food must be provided.

My experience is that these meetings vary in how they are arranged and tend to be quite formal in practice. They can easily turn into opportunities for participants to engage in da'wa (invitation) and evangelism. These can be counter-productive and while both sides may want to promote an exclusivist view of their faith, I suggest that it is the trust and respect engendered through the depth of relationships coming out of such meetings that is of prime importance. The Christian-Muslim Forum has produced some helpful guidelines for such encounters, which should prevent meetings descending into entrenched opposite camps. These guidelines (see appendix 2) provide a basis for both maintaining faithful witness, while ensuring that there is no deliberate seeking to ridicule or demean the others' faith and respecting the others' right to hold and defend their faith. While mentioning issues that might cause controversy, such as conversion, it recognises that only God converts, and affirms the individuals' right to change faith should they wish to. These guidelines provide the basis for much of the interfaith work in which I have engaged over the last 15 years.

MBUs have been the staple diet of early encounters between Christians and Muslims who seek to develop a deeper understanding beyond the symbolic

meetings often at festivals or in response to an incident. They do enable authentic witness, mutual respect and understanding to develop.

However, there are a number of concerns:

1. In practice, they have a short shelf life, and can easily become symbolic and general unless they develop a robust format where difference can be expressed with authenticity, and hard questions considered, while maintaining the closeness of relationship.
2. They have no end product – where do they go? What are they seeking to achieve in the longer-term? As with other formats for dialogue, they seem to have little vision beyond the immediate understanding and the fulfilment of the mission imperatives of both faiths.
3. While fulfilling the mission imperative, there is much more to dialogue which enables communities of different faiths and cultures to co-exist and prosper – the ‘cohesion’ agenda. Meetings for better understanding fail to address this agenda, although I think there might be scope to develop such agendas if the organisers have such a vision.

Scriptural Reasoning

Scriptural Reasoning (SR) has been pioneered in the UK by the University of Cambridge Interfaith Programme:

[this] is a practice of inter-faith reading. Small groups of Jews, Christians and Muslims, and sometimes people of other faiths, gather to read short passages from their scriptures (Scriptural Reasoning).

Its origins can be traced to Peter Ochs, of the University of Virginia. He was one of the original members of a small group of Jewish philosophers who called themselves ‘textual reasoners’ (Peter Ochs). Textual reasoning evolved into a larger movement which Ochs dubbed "scriptural reasoning", and Ochs co-founded the Society for Scriptural Reasoning in 1995, together with David F. Ford, of the University of Cambridge. Ford brought the principles to the UK and developed the Cambridge Interfaith Programme (Cambridge Interfaith

Programme), which remains one of two centres for SR, the other being the Scripture Interpretation Practice programme at the University of Virginia, led by Peter Ochs. SR has grown significantly across the world in order to support groups; then to connect previous participants the Scriptural Reasoning Network was set up. The most recent development is Rose Castle, the former residence of the Bishop of Carlisle, as a centre for interfaith peace and reconciliation, with SR as its major activity.

Usually a small group of Christians, Muslims and Jews gather together. Taking a common theme three passages are read aloud, one from each of the Scriptures, the Tanakh, the New Testament and the Qur'an. The facilitator reminds the participants of the guidelines:

- Read each text carefully – noting as many details as possible – ‘grammatical constructions, changes in tone or emphasis, surprising bits of dialogue, gaps in the narrative, repetitions, images, etc.’ (Scriptural Reasoning Network). Then be ready to share these observations.
- Use your understanding of languages and contexts to strengthen, not undermine, the conversation.
- Try not ‘to defer to others about their texts or traditions. Give your own reading of the text before asking how others read it’.
- Do not be afraid to include your faith commitments in your interpretations. ‘As a Christian ...’ (Scriptural Reasoning Network).
- Listen carefully and charitably to others’ comments.
- Remember that SR is an experiment in interfaith dialogue (Scriptural Reasoning Network).

The group meeting continues with a passage being read out aloud, sometimes more than once. Someone then gives a few prepared words about the text, mentioning its context, its historical background and traditional interpretation, but this should be brief. Observations are made and clarifying questions

asked, and conversation develops. Conversation circulates freely, and comes to either a natural end or the end of the time allotted.

The same routine is then applied to the second and then the third passage, before the participants compare the three passages with one another. What was similar or different? This should not take too long, before finally asking the question 'So what?' What difference do these passages make to the ways we relate to each other, or think about our lives? (Scriptural Reasoning).

SR has much to commend it. It treats the different faith community's scriptures with respect and authority. It allows the committed to express their faith with conviction and integrity; it enables honest exploration of similarities and differences, and it develops in the participants values that can develop into relationships of real depth. However, it often comes across as an intellectual exercise, removed from the realities of life. The rarefied atmosphere of the university will inevitably attract those who are already committed to interfaith engagement. It will attract the theologically literate from different communities, and, as such, does a fine job of directing their engagement. SR will give direct expression to that commitment; but it is unlikely to touch the mass of people living in the Lancashire or Yorkshire 'Mill Towns'; nor the shop keepers and taxi drivers of many cities.

I have used adaptations of SR in the development of dialogue groups in Manchester and Oldham. However, in these groups the priority has always been the relationships between people, where the texts or methods of engagement are merely tools to enable a depth of relationship to develop.

The Dialogue Society

In the UK, the Dialogue Society (DS) is a registered charity with branches in 11 cities, including Manchester. It is this Manchester branch that has provided one of the research groups in this research. The DS was established in London in 1999,

with the aim of advancing social cohesion by connecting communities, empowering people to engage and contributing to the development of ideas on dialogue and community building ... this by bringing people together through discussion forums, courses, capacity building publications and outreach ... It was founded by British Muslims of Turkish background inspired by the teachings and example of Muslim scholar and peace advocate Fethullah Gülen (Dialogue Society).

Although not a “religious or ethnic organisation, it aims to facilitate dialogue on a ... range of social issues, regardless of any particular faith or religion. It stands for democracy, human rights, the non-instrumentalisation of religion in politics, equality and freedom of speech” (Dialogue Society).

The DS understands dialogue to “consist of meaningful interaction and exchange between people of different groups (social, cultural, political and religious) who come together through various kinds of conversations or activities with a view to increased understanding” (Dialogue Society). They consider that their target group is a cross-section of society; however, my experience is that it is mainly the educated middle-class that self-select to engage in such dialogue. They declare that their areas of interest include:

dialogue theories and practice, community cohesion and multiculturalism, identity, integration and citizenship, family, education and youth, media, culture and communication, human rights and civil liberties, theology and religious studies, world cultures and societies, peace-building and conflict resolution (Dialogue Society).

The DS declare that their method is to seek “to contribute to social cohesion at three different levels: directly bringing different social groups together, empowering others to do the same, and contributing to the development of thought on dialogue and community building” (Dialogue Society). The DS has three areas of work: connecting communities by bringing people together into community circles, discussion forums and outreach by community

coordinators; empowering engagement by building capacity for dialogue through an MA course that they share with Keele University (Dialogue Society), publications, and dialogue schools; and inspiring ideas, that is, developing new ideas for dialogue through forums, publications and Research Fellows.

The DS in the UK is playing an increasingly important role in developing and promoting dialogue between Muslims and other faiths. Their work seems to be largely confined to the educated middle-classes, and they have built up some impressive relationships with universities, notably Derby, where they have partnered with Professor Paul Weller and developed the *Journal of Dialogue Studies*, of which Weller is the academic editor. At present, the founding organisation in Turkey, *Hizmet* (meaning 'service'), is under considerable pressure from the Turkish Government and hence it is struggling for followers from within the UK Turkish communities. This situation could well change, as the political wind alters direction.

My experience of Hizmet, as with SR, has been that it appeals to the educated middle-classes. While it is important that they are involved in dialogue, it is the more challenging socio-economic groups such as those living in social-housing estates and segregated communities, for example, in the 'northern mill towns', where engagement needs to take place in order to tackle some of the cohesion issues. This research includes two groups with people from these demographics, as well as a DS group.

More will be said about this organisation as the thesis explores the different research groups in chapters 3 and 4.

Faith-Based Reconciliation – Brian Cox

Rev Canon Brian Cox (Episcopalian Priest – Rector of Christ the King Episcopal Church, Santa Barbara, California) has pioneered 'Faith-Based Reconciliation', founding the 'Reconciliation Institute' in 1996, to develop a

“faith-based reconciliation process as a religious framework for peacemaking in intractable identity-based conflicts” (Faith-based Reconciliation). In 1999 Cox joined the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (Faith-based Reconciliation) in Washington, becoming its Senior Vice President. He has worked in Kashmir and the Middle East, seeking to develop communications between communities in conflict. Faith-Based Reconciliation describes itself as a methodology in ‘a religious framework for peacemaking’ (Faith-based Reconciliation).

The Faith-Based Reconciliation process utilizes a series of presentation and small group exercises, culminating in a Service of Reconciliation to explain the core values of faith-based reconciliation, empower participants in reconciliation/peacebuilding skills and provide a climate that will change hearts as well as minds (Faith-based Reconciliation).

The eight core values are defined as: pluralism, meaning that we seek unity in the midst of diversity; compassionate inclusion meaning that we seek to overcome hostility by the practice of unconditional love towards others, including one’s enemies; peace-making, meaning that we seek the peaceful resolution of conflicts between individuals and groups; faith-based social justice meaning, that we seek the common good through transformation of the soul of a community; forgiveness, meaning we exercise forgiveness and repentance as individuals and communities to create the possibility of a better future together; healing, meaning that we seek to heal the wounds of history through acknowledgement of suffering and injustice; acknowledging God’s sovereignty is the bedrock of the faith-based perspective; atonement, meaning that, ultimately, reconciliation is the process of finding peace with God (Faith-based Reconciliation).

The ‘Service of Reconciliation’ is significant in the process; this is “a ritual framework of reading from sacred texts, prayers, acknowledgements, apologies and expressions of forgiveness” (Faith-based Reconciliation). A key objective of the work is the transformation of hearts and relationships and

hence the Service of Reconciliation is an important event; all the presentations and small group exercises lead up to this moment (Faith-based Reconciliation).

Cox maintains that communication lies at the centre of both the cause and resolution of conflict. “Unless two parties can communicate with each other in a constructive, creative and respectful manner, there is little hope of resolving the issues or restoring the relationships” (Faith-based Reconciliation). One of the tools used is ‘Learning Conversations’ (Patton et al., 2011), which seeks to find ways to navigate difficult conversations, described as

...anytime we feel vulnerable or our self-esteem is implicated, when the issues at stake are important or the outcome uncertain, when we care deeply about what is being discussed or about the people with whom we are discussing it, there is potential for us to experience the conversation as difficult (Faith-based Reconciliation).

It is noted that a learning conversation is ‘in reality three conversations’:

1. The ‘What Happened?’ element, where the parties focus on their perception of the truth and their assessment of the intentions and impact, and their contributions to the problem.
2. The ‘feelings’ conversation, which enables the parties to bring to the surface their unexpressed feelings which are a matter of the heart.
3. The ‘identity’ conversation, which means that the parties are challenged to look honestly at their perceptions of themselves (Faith-based Reconciliation).

Patton, Stone and Heen write that “our anxiety results not just from having to face the other person, but from having to face ourselves. The conversation poses a threat to our identity, the story we tell about ourselves” (Patton et al, 2011). The goals of learning conversations are, first, to create a ‘third story’, which describes the problem in non-judgmental terms and, second, to create a resonance between the parties. Third, they are to allow ‘identity quakes’ to

occur, when the parties hear themselves or their motives described in unflattering terms. Fourth, they allow the parties to consider the effects of their past actions, leading to a collective acknowledgment and apology, and fifth, to enable “the parties to surface antagonism, vent anger and mistrust so as to move beyond victimhood to volition and constructive exploration of options” (Patton et al., 2011, p.4).

Cox adapts this model to a faith-based context, developing five basic components: Sharing life journeys and building common ground; sharing perceptions of the conflict or problem; sharing where each has experienced and caused offence to the other; exploring each community’s narrative of history and perception of historical wounds; engaging in a problem-solving approach utilising a faith-based reconciliation lens (Faith-based Reconciliation).

Having considered these four different approaches to interfaith dialogue, with their strengths and weaknesses, this thesis now focuses on the reconciliation work of Musalaha, which draws on the faith-based reconciliation of Brian Cox, while developing its own six-stage cycle, the subject of the research.

Musalaha

This thesis asks whether *Musalaha* (‘Reconciliation’ in Arabic), provides a realistic model for fruitful UK interfaith dialogue. It is a project pioneered by Dr Salim Munayer, initially from Bethlehem Bible College, which has developed into a separate organisation. It describes itself as having “brought Israelis and Palestinians together for over two decades, promoting reconciliation as [Jesus] demonstrated” (Musalaha). Primarily focusing on Palestinian and Israeli followers of Jesus, Musalaha has developed a programme of activities that take the participants through stages that lead to personal and public reconciliation.

Musalaha considers its main aims to be the building of relationships, dealing with the issues, training in reconciliation and leadership and thereby impacting

society (Musalaha). The Musalaha six-stage cycle (see p. 10) is the activity that enables these aims to be achieved. This is often produced through taking participants out into the desert, into a neutral place, away from their familiar surroundings, where issues of power and control, so prevalent in the Israel/Palestine conflict, can be considered without external pressure. Here, the participants will begin to deal with divisive issues. This is not an easy process and all the participants receive training in reconciliation and leadership. The long-term purpose is to impact and transform society, especially where there are intractable disputes, misunderstandings and mistrust, often built up over decades. Musalaha maintains that “participants who have gone through this process are able to bear witness to its transformative power” (Musalaha). The method used to facilitate these aims is the six-stage cycle of reconciliation.

Musalaha: The Curriculum of Reconciliation. The Musalaha Curriculum of reconciliation has six stages (see p.10):

Stage 1: Beginning Relationships

Stage 2: Opening Up

Stage 3: Withdrawal

Stage 4: Reclaiming Identity

Stage 5: Committing and Returning

Stage 6: Taking Steps

The thesis explores this model and its relevance for Muslim-Christian interfaith dialogue in the UK. It asks the question: How can this model be appropriated successfully in the UK to provide another means to enable different religious communities to engage appropriately with each other?

What draws people into such dialogue in the first place? The 2001 ‘race riots’ in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford and the subsequent report illustrate this; Ted

Cantle says, “The towns showed a ‘depth of polarisation’ around segregated communities living ‘a series of parallel lives’” (The Guardian, 11 December 2001). While violence now breaks out only occasionally, there are still deep divisions between communities for which a model of inter-community, interfaith engagement is required to enable both individuals and groups to prosper. The desire to break through these divisions is a significant motivator for the development of such dialogue, as this research will indicate.

Munayer suggests that there are different methods for dealing with conflict, depending on the circumstances (Munayer, 2011, p.19). Some organisations favour approaches that work with individuals, by building personal relationships. Others advocate focusing on group dynamics, considering that the conflicts are between different identities or nations (Hanafi, 2007, p.69). In this research, in the UK context, I shall be considering both, with initial engagement being between individuals, though many of them carry corporate responsibility within their communities, or are young adults who will be influential in the future. Munayer stresses that “reconciliation is not an event or even a linear process, but instead a somewhat cyclical and chaotic process that is exhibited in stages” (Munayer, 1998, p.73).

Stage 1: Beginning Relationships

A number of principles need to be established when developing such groups: Power issues – ensure that as far as possible there are equal numbers of Christians and Muslims (and Hindus) and that the numbers remain small enough for the development of personal relationships – Munayer suggests no more than 30 people (Munayer, 2011, p. 20).

The groups in this research were no more than 15-20 people.

Work together – invest into the process. For Musalaha, taking people into the desert means that they have to fend for each other – cooking, cleaning etc. In this research to foster collaboration the participants, both male and female,

were expected to contribute time, finances, food and to cook and clean while on residential.

Listening – learn to properly listen to each other. Groups often want to start by declaring their positions and do their ‘da’wa’ or ‘evangelism’; but once their duty is done, serious listening takes place. Musalaha teaches listening skills, attending, hearing, levelling, risking and caring, which prepares the participants for challenging encounters. In the UK context no training was given, but the groups developed the skills by mutual consensus with guidance from the leaders.

Where is the process going? In Musalaha there is teaching on the process with a road map for the sessions. In this research, only one of the three groups engaged with any sense of process, while the others developed in a less structured way. All were aware that the sessions were part of the research, but in two of the groups the research was just one part of a longer dialogue process, which over time developed into the Musalaha process.

Stage 2: Opening Up

This stage provides the foundations for all subsequent engagement. It presents sensitive and challenging issues that will inevitably produce emotions of surprise, vulnerability, loss of self-esteem and, possibly, fear of adverse response from the group (Munayer, 2011, p. 22). The participants’ personal and group identities will be challenged, and hence Musalaha concentrates on commonalities, rather than differences, until participants are more relaxed and comfortable in dealing with areas of controversy. This may well bring up issues of power imbalances where participants may retreat into familiar positions. Munayer notes that, “generally groups of a younger generation are able and willing to proceed at a faster rate” (p. 22). This was certainly the experience of the research, which is considered later.

The issues around identity form the basis of this stage and are considered in some depth and will be considered more fully in chapter 5. Also in this stage,

different approaches to conflict are considered: Management, Resolution and Transformation. Although the relevance for the Israel/Palestine context is clear, there are lessons to learn for dialogue in any context; and in interpersonal relationships, the way a person handles conflict is crucial, especially in interfaith dialogue. Different approaches may be used at various occasions, depending upon the context.

The next issue dealt with is 'History and Narrative', and the difference between them. By this stage, despite tough issues being considered, the relationships should have developed to be strong enough to consider the issues participants bring with them.

Stage 2 is the stage where most of the relationship building develops and Munayer explores some of its obstacles. He identifies ideological obstacles: the political influences that shape thinking and affect attitudes; and religious ideology, the beliefs or theological understanding that participants believe drive their thinking. He identifies a further ideological obstacle which may be particularly acute in the Israel/Palestine context, that of justice (p. 114). There may be physical obstacles (p. 115) for some communities. In the Israel/Palestine context the divisions are clear and stark. However, as Cattle (The Guardian, 11 December 2001) identified in Oldham, the physical barriers created by segregated communities present significant obstacles. Physical barriers may include the information, lack of information, or, more problematic, misinformation that comes out of government and media. At the time of the Oldham riots, David Ritchie, who produced a report on behalf of Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council, was particularly critical of the role played by the *Oldham Chronicle* in regard to discrimination in its reporting of incidents affecting different communities (David Ritchie, 2001, p. 64f).

Emotional obstacles can be amongst the most difficult to deal with. People entering dialogue may come with suspicions of other people and their intentions. The issues of da'wa/evangelism as a motive have been raised as a suspicion in every dialogue group with which I have been involved. These

issues of suspicion take time to resolve, but my experience, as with that of Musalaha, has been that over time this and other emotional issues can be resolved. Other emotional issues may include fear of the unknown, of embarrassment, of what their own community might say, knowing that they are dialoguing with 'the enemy'. Munayer notes that denial of responsibility and reality are issues to be faced. In tackling all these emotional issues, Munayer is at pains to emphasise that they should not be dealt with too quickly, which itself can be damaging. "Once relationships are developed and thereby trust between the participants established ... issues can be discussed and dealt with" (Munayer, 2011, p. 117).

Psychological obstacles are prevalent though participants may be unaware of them, especially when challenged on an issue. Munayer sums these up as 'prejudice'. They include: us v. them (othering); moral superiority; ethnocentrism; and control (Munayer, 2011, p. 117).

To deal with prejudice, Musalaha uses 'The Contact Hypothesis', which states that 'the more we interact with the other, and the more we get to know the other, the less prejudice we will have toward the other' (Munayer, 2011, p. 117).

Munayer is confident that despite the intensity of some obstacles, they can be overcome - remembering that reconciliation is a long process and that coming up against these obstacles is an important normal part of the process. The UK context presents many of these obstacles, perhaps with less intensity, and this research explores how some of them can be managed.

Stage 3: Withdrawal

Stage 2 can be traumatic as the participants confront issues; personally, corporately, and, often, as ethnic groups. Consideration of our histories, our prejudices and our differences can raise complex issues concerning identity, and all will come to this next stage asking deep questions about themselves. This stage 3 gives participants space to reflect. All will go away to consider

themselves and their relationships; some may not return to the process, while others may take some time to return. For those who do return, there will be a commitment to develop these relationships more deeply and to be changed in the process. However, during this stage, three main issues are raised: power, forgiveness and dealing with trauma. This stage is vital for the process and provides key 'epiphany' moments, where realisation of the challenge of the process of reconciliation becomes clearer. It is the crucial stage for reconciliation and provides the springboard for subsequent engagement.

Stage 4: Reclaiming Identity

This stage brings people back into relationship with a renewed commitment to explore their relationships and with a desire to 'seek peace'. While set in the context of the Israel/Palestine conflict, Musalaha's six-stage cycle considers this stage as a return to identity and concentrates on the issues that conflict produces. This study asks whether this model is relevant in the UK context, where, although community divisions are not as volatile as in Israel/Palestine incidents, such as the Manchester (22 May 2017) and London (22 March & 5 June 2017) terrorist attacks and the subsequent rise in Islamophobic hate crime, provide the context for engagement. The return to the process with fresh vision is crucial, and an important question is how this stage is experienced in a less pressurised context.

As Munayer reflects on what happens as people move into conflict and violence, he turns to the experience of Miroslav Volf, who maintains that, 'instead of reconfiguring myself to make space for the other, I seek to reshape the other into who I want her to be in order that in relation to her I may be who I want to be' (Volf, 1997, p.92). These tensions and threats to oneself, he affirms, often lead to exclusion in which one's own identity is affirmed at the expense of the other (Munayer, 2011, p.192). Volf, who is from Croatia, was reflecting upon the civil wars in the Balkans; and Munayer expresses parallels with the Israel/Palestine context.

While the UK context may be different, aspects of an exclusion/victimhood mentality can easily develop in individuals and communities, especially if perceptions of discrimination and disadvantage are common. Munayer gives four stages in order to move beyond victim mentality: 1. We are unaware of the hold this mentality has over us and we are happy with a sense of standing on the moral high ground; hence we see no need for self-criticism. 2. When confronted, a person denies having such a complex. 3. The beginnings of an awareness of certain thought patterns and the “use of language in our societies that belies our victimhood mentality” (Munayer, 2011, p. 195). Blame, and a refusal to accept responsibility for our complicity in this, begins to creep in. 4. Awareness of our victimhood mentality grows and the person reflects on their own and others’ part in perpetuating it. Self-criticism begins and seeks to combat victimhood in themselves as well as to challenge others. Munayer describes it as coming to the place where a person can say the Serenity Prayer (by Reinhold Niebuhr): “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference” (Munayer, 2011, p. 192).

Munayer continues by reflecting on how identity can be exclusive because it can separate from some, while connecting to others. Exclusion can lead to violence and conflict, and feeds off hate and indifference toward the out-group, leading to a distortion of identity, as took place in May 2001 in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham. However, it is noted that identity must have healthy boundaries in it, which distinguish us from others; but these need not become divisive.

As participants seek to reclaim their identities, they find that there is a significant challenge in reconciliation. Inevitably, in dialogue, participants will ask each other why, challenge preconceptions and encounter each other in their woundedness and brokenness, where all are experiencing the rediscovery of their identities. This is a vulnerable time, where hurts and wounds become visible and where fear and temptation to withdraw are strong. However, willingness to proceed will enable learning to embrace the other, for which Volf

offers three stages: righting our understanding through repentance and forgiveness; coming to embrace; learning to value our common humanity (Volf, 1997, p. 117).

In 'reclaiming identity', Munayer strongly maintains that "reconciliation is not possible unless we are comfortable with who we are, and can open ourselves and create space to include others in our identities" (Munayer, 2011, p. 200). These encounters are merely the place where identities are discovered and developed. He goes on to say that "only through mutual respect, self-awareness and humility can the reconciliation process move forward" (Munayer, 2011, p. 200).

It is also important to 'Remember Rightly': "redemption will be complete only when the creation of 'all things new' is coupled with the passage of 'all things old' into the nihil of nonexistence and nonremembrance" (Volf, 1997, p. 135-6). So the issue of how pain and loss are remembered is important – often, when the past is remembered, it is allowed to come into the present, with the accompanying emotions associated with that memory.

We are not only shaped by memories; we ourselves shape our memories that shape us. And since we do so, the consequences are significant; for because we shape our memories, our identities cannot consist simply of what we remember (Volf, 2007, p. 25).

Our memories are selective and it is impossible to recall all the facts, as we may downplay some events and exaggerate others. Clearly, there is both an individual memory and a collective, even national, memory, all of which are shaped; and the collective memory is vulnerable to manipulation and coercion.

Munayer maintains that for the memory to be healed, and to be able to move forward, it is necessary to name the past truthfully; "to clarify ... what happened, how we reacted to it, and how we are reacting to it now" (Volf, 2007, p.25). But what can be done with memories that are so horrendous that redemption cannot be found in them? Munayer suggests that "labelling them

as seamless segments of our life-story”, means that they are “no longer loose beasts wreaking havoc in our inner being and external relationships” (Volf, 2007, p.77).

Volf suggests that memory can be redemptive in a number of ways: healing, when a person interprets the memory in a new light; acknowledgement, when the remembered offence is voiced and heard so the victim feels the injustice suffered is known; solidarity, when society refuses to be indifferent and struggles with us against further similar offences; protection, when society punishes the offenders for the wrongs committed (Volf, 2007, p. 28-32).

Stage 5 – Committing and Returning

The next two stages spring from a desire for continuing the process and a willingness to engage with the issues involved. Having committed themselves to the process in many ways, the hard part has been achieved and now the Musalaha cycle seeks to support the participants as they develop deeper relationships and consider them from a new perspective.

A number of supportive issues are considered:

This stage deals with discouragement, which is an inevitable part of the journey of reconciliation, and sets in at various stages of the cycle. There is also a particular vulnerability by now – some have left, others are undecided and for those who have taken the brave step of continuing the process, it can feel unsafe and insecure. Considering disappointment at this point prepares the participants for the struggle of the last two stages. “Reconciliation calls for change in the status quo... for truth to speak to power, and subsequent spiritual and social change...” (Munayer, 2011, p. 236). The participants have glimpsed a different world; frustration and disappointment can easily set in as change happens slowly; others have not experienced the process of reconciliation that they have, especially if friends or family have decided not to continue in the process and it may feel quite lonely.

Munayer turns to Martin Luther King Jr as a role model (Munayer, 2011, p. 236-240) in dealing with discouragement, by considering the predicament that he faced as a young minister in Montgomery, Alabama shortly after Rosa Parks had refused to give up her bus seat in December 1955. King is still considered a remarkable role model for his relentless commitment to nonviolence as he strove for the civil rights of African Americans. Munayer provides King as a model of someone who went through moments of doubt and discouragement and yet pressed forward. He gives some tips for dealing with discouragement: 1. Expect discouragement and opposition to reconciliation. 2. Remember your vision and goal while in the day-to-day struggles. 3. Look at the lives of people like King. 4. Stay connected with people of like mind, taking time to develop the relationships you've already established. 5. Think of what has been established, no matter how small, how you have changed and the positive effects already achieved. 6. Take time to do positive things that feed you – that you enjoy, not allowing reconciliation to be your only focus (Munayer, 2011, p. 240).

Also in stage 5, Munayer considers the theological and biblical understanding of justice and reconciliation. In the context of dialogue between Messianic Jews and Palestinian Christians this is entirely appropriate. In the Christian-Muslim interfaith context some consideration of the Qur'anic understanding must be given along with the appropriate texts. Exploring justice from different perspectives, such as restitution, vindication/vengeance, retribution/punishment, judgment, mercy, forgiveness and repentance, Munayer then focuses on reconciliation as the focus for the whole process. Again, there are many biblical examples to draw upon – the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), the two greatest Commandments (Matthew 22:34-40), the importance of identity (Ephesians 2:13-18), the death of Jesus on the cross, and others.

Stage 6: Taking Steps

Stage 6 takes the participants deeper into 'Justice and Reconciliation' in practice, exploring such historical examples as the Treaty of Versailles after World War 1 and its effects on Germany, the Nuremburg trials post World War 2, before considering the most recent example, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa (Truth and Reconciliation Commission).

Munayer is particularly indebted to the work of Mae Elise Cannon, whose book *Social Justice Handbook: Small Steps for a Better World* (Cannon, 2009), calls people to engage with the issues of social justice facing the world, and then to get involved in activities that enable change. She describes herself as a minister, writer, and academic who cares deeply about God's heart for the poor and the oppressed (Cannon). In her book, she concentrates on issues of social justice, such as the environment, AIDS, capitalism, health care, women, racism, giving over 80 topics for discussion leading to activities. She strongly affirms the desire for community/social change, and identifies barriers and inhibitors, before giving eight steps in the process of change: 1. Identifying the Problem. 2. Overcoming complacency. 3. Developing a dynamic team. 4. Defining Reality. 5. Determining the Vision and strategies for a solution. 6. Committing to Specific Goals. 7. Celebrating small victories. 8. Long-term and results-orientated change in communities.

Munayer considers this sixth stage as one where participants, who have journeyed together through some deep dialogue, will now turn outward, asking how reconciliation between people of different faiths can bring about social change. It is at this stage that issues of social cohesion become relevant, as participants ask how their experiences can affect their heritage communities. Chapter 7 will consider these issues further.

The six-stage cycle of the Musalaha project provides a model of reconciliation between communities either at enmity with each other, or where there is lack of understanding leading to mistrust and confusion. The purpose of the research is to ask how this model of reconciliation provides a model for developing UK interfaith dialogue.

Chapter 3 Methods and Methodologies

Using the Musalaha model of dialogue, developed in the context of the Arab/Israeli conflict in the Middle East, this research explores this model with three groups engaged in dialogue in the UK context. Its ontological perspective (Mason, 2002, p. 14) considers relationships as the fundamental social reality underpinning society, cohesion and harmony between peoples. Its epistemological position (Mason, 2002, p. 16) is that the experiences of individuals and groups provide valid sources to consider the quality of relationships. This qualitative research explores human behaviour, asking why and how relationships between people of different religious and cultural backgrounds can change. It takes an ethnographic approach which reflects upon at least 15 years' experience of engaging in interfaith dialogue; both the researcher and the different dialogue groups as the subjects of the research are considered.

Ethnography

Ethnography is the study of people or groups (from Greek ἔθνος - ethnos "folk, people, nation" and γράφω - grapho "I write"). It is "grounded in first-hand experience and exploration of a particular social or cultural setting on the basis of (though not exclusively by) participant observation" (Mason, 2002, p. 55). Mason affirms that "observation allows the generation of multidimensional data on social interaction in specific contexts" (Mason, 2002, p. 85). Nigel Fielding goes further, describing ethnography as 'a method of discovery' and that "as a means of gaining a first insight into a culture or social process, as a source of hypotheses for detailed investigation using other methods, it is unparalleled" (Fielding, 2008, p. 268). He affirms that "ethnography always involves studying behaviour in 'natural settings', as opposed to the experimental settings of clinical psychology" (Fielding, 2008, p. 270).

Ethnography has been referred to as “a curious blending of methodological techniques” (Fielding, 2008, p.270). This research is typical of ethnography, combining different methodological techniques.

Methods

The methods used in this research are:

- Critical reflection of the Musalaha project, which includes a detailed examination of the manual *The Six-stage Cycle: A Curriculum of Reconciliation*, with a semi-structured interview with its author, Salim Munayer.
- Participant observation of three dialogue groups, two based in Oldham as part of my work as Interfaith Officer in the town, and one in Manchester as part of the Dialogue Society, recording some of the sessions and subsequently making transcripts of the sessions, along with fieldnotes.
- Reflexive consideration of the effects of the dialogue process upon the researcher, using an autoethnographic model. This includes personal journalling of the process and reflections upon the experiences encountered.

The *Musalaha Six-stage Cycle – a Curriculum of Reconciliation* was explored in chapter 2. A semi-structured interview with its author, Salim Munayer, was conducted on Friday 8 January 2016 in the context of a break in a conference that he was attending at the Nazarene Theological College, Didsbury, Manchester. Mason considers that all such interviewing has some core features in common. First, there is an interactional exchange of dialogue, face to face or over the internet or telephone. Second, the style is ‘relatively informal’; Burgess describes it as “conversations with a purpose” (Burgess, 1982, p. 102). Third, they will have a thematic or topic-centred approach. And fourth, they start from the assumption that “knowledge is situated and contextual” (Mason, 2002, p. 62). Fetterman maintains that “a structured or semi-structured interview is most valuable when the fieldworker comprehends

the fundamentals of a community from the 'insider's' perspective" (Fetterman, 2010, p. 40). This fits well in this context due to the relationship already established with Salim Munayer, and the research being already well developed prior to the interview. It was an ideal time to dig deeper into Munayer's perception of the six-stage cycle. Fetterman continues; "questions typically emerge from ... conversation. In some cases, they are serendipitous and result from comments by the participant" (Fetterman, 2010, p. 41). He adds a note of caution for although they are;

informal interviews of the most natural situations or formats for data collection and analysis.... Unfortunately, some degree of contamination is always present... and that certain questions will impose an artificiality' (Fetterman p. 41).

However, Fetterman adds a number of wise suggestions, such as sensitivity to timing and the tone of voice used (p. 41). He points out that the rapport between interviewer and interviewee is crucial (p. 40), noting that there is always the temptation to exploit a situation with unfair or inappropriate questions (p. 42). This inevitably raises ethical issues (p. 134-139) which will be considered later.

The semi-structured interview with Salim Munayer was recorded and transcribed. He formally agreed to this process and was relaxed and seemingly comfortable with the interview. The interview was used to raise questions about the six-stage cycle and to seek clarification, especially over some of the more controversial aspects, e.g. stage 3: Withdrawal.

Participant-observation of the interfaith dialogue groups was carried out over a three-year period, although the groups may have been in existence for longer, in which case retrospective reflection upon the development and proceedings of the group is included. The three groups involved in the research are a group of Turkish Muslims and English Christians, which I call the Turkish Dialogue Group, which has been meeting for seven years, a Priest-Imams Group which continues to meet after five years; and a Catalyst Group which met over a

three-year period, with the serious engagement taking place at three residencies. These groups will be considered later in more depth. All the groups worked at different speeds, which itself is worthy of note.

Participant-observation involves the researcher “immersing herself or himself in a research ‘setting’ so that they can experience and observe at first hand a range of dimensions in and of that setting” (Mason, 2002, p. 84). Mason acknowledges that this may be one element in a broader ethnographic approach. Fielding notes that there are dangers in this: “an important problem ethnographers face is that of ‘going native’... one is participating in order to gather data, not to provide the group with a new member”. He affirms that, “a certain detachment is needed when interpreting that data” (Fielding, 2008, p. 271). However, from the opposite perspective there is also the danger of ‘not getting close enough’, and thereby “of adopting a superficial approach which merely provides a veneer of plausibility for an analysis to which the researcher is already committed” (Fielding, 2008, p. 271). Issues concerning immersion will be considered later when focusing on the ethics involved.

Keeping a record of the interfaith engagement in these dialogue groups included the use of fieldnotes, audio recordings and reflective notes. Fieldnotes and reflective notes were recorded after the events. “Producing fieldnotes is the observer’s *raison d’être*: if you do not record what happens, you might as well not be in the setting” (Fielding, 2008, p. 273). Gilbert maintains that “fieldnotes take three forms: mental notes, jotted notes and full fieldnotes” (Fielding, 2008, p. 273). All three forms were used with the groups involved in this research. However, in all cases the notes were taken either straight after the sessions or some days or weeks afterwards. Some of these notes had to be retrospective due to consent issues, to be considered later. Silverman notes that detail is important, and that “expanding fieldnotes develops a sense of what is going on” (Silverman, 2010, p. 229). For all three groups involved in this research fieldnotes, recording what happened in the sessions, especially key remarks or decisions taken were important, as was later reflection upon how and why these things took place.

In addition to the fieldnotes and later reflection and expansion, audio recordings were taken of all three groups at various points in the research. These recordings were transcribed and coded and then used in the analysis. However, Mason adds a caution:

...it is important not to over-estimate the representational or reflective qualities of interview transcripts, audio and visual recordings ... A transcription is always partial partly because it is an inadequate record of non-verbal aspects of the interaction (even if you try to insert these in the form of fieldnotes into the transcription afterwards), and also because judgments are made (usually by the person doing the transcription) about which verbal utterances to turn into text, and how to do it. (Mason, 2002, p. 77).

She is keen to emphasise the role played by the researcher: “ethnographers, on the other hand, have long sought to draw reflexively on their own experiences and perceptions, and to see these as part of their data” (Mason, p. 77).

Hence, this research draws heavily upon the personal reflections of the researcher during the process, and the notes/diary that I have kept of the effects upon my thinking and attitudes during the research period. Clearly there are dangers. Mason highlights this:

...a major challenge for interpretivist approaches centres on the question of how you can be sure that you are not simply inventing data, or misrepresenting your research participants' perceptions (Mason, 2002, p. 76).

Mason suggests that by questioning assumptions and constantly being aware of these dangers, understanding that the recording cannot capture all the data, these dangers can be limited.

Brief consideration of the research groups (further descriptions in Chapter 4):

1. The Priests-Imams Group in Oldham

As part of my work in Oldham in 2011, I initiated a monthly group meeting of Christian leaders and Muslim leaders. Numbers in the group fluctuated but there were always over 12 and sometimes up to 30 people present. The group had co-leaders, myself and Muhammad* (* denotes a pseudonym). We coordinated the venue and timings, decided upon the topics to be discussed and arranged the food, which was an important component to the meetings. This group started before the research commenced and it was about two years into the life of the group that I decided to use it for the research. However, for those two years, from its inception, I had been keeping a diary, and notes on the meetings, as part of my work. At first, a few in the group were uncomfortable with this research – in fact one Imam was suspicious of my motives and what I might do with the information gained through the research. For two years I waited, and this Imam left the group – he was of a different Islamic tradition from most of the others, which is of interest in itself. Then I asked the group if they would be willing to be a research group. Without hesitation, they all agreed and for the last six months of my time with the group I was able to record and make notes on the meetings. This group has continued to meet, although I have moved out of the job I was engaged in. Hence, the research into this group is a snap-shot of the life of a group, which is still growing deeper in its engagement. One of the last meetings I attended was a night away together, where eight Muslim and eight Christian leaders spent 24 hours together discussing issues of common interest. These sessions were recorded and transcribed.

2. The Oldham Catalyst Group

As part of the government-funded Near Neighbours Catalyst programme (Church Urban Fund), administered by the Church Urban Fund, groups were set up in designated areas of England. The North of England included three designated areas, Bradford, Burnley and Oldham. I was responsible for developing Catalyst in Oldham. The aim was to draw together young adults

(18-30 years), both male and female, from the major faiths in the area to engage in an interfaith leadership programme.

In 2013 a group of 12 young adults – six Muslims and six Christians - spent a long weekend (Thursday evening – Sunday afternoon) at a retreat house (Scargill House in the Yorkshire Dales) engaging in leadership training, with a Muslim facilitator, Rafiq Tariq*. Rafiq is a qualified Myers-Briggs (Myers-Briggs) facilitator and the course revolved around the Myers-Briggs Personality Types. We considered personality and leadership, personality and faith, and many other aspects concerning how our personality shapes how we view the world. It was fascinating to watch relationships grow, often based more on personality than on religious affiliation.

The first residential was very successful and some good relationships developed, but sadly it was not possible, despite attempts, to arrange regular meetings afterwards. However, a second residential was organised in 2014, with a larger group, which included five Hindus and their leader. Again, Scargill House was the venue and the same format and facilitator were used. This residential was also very positive. At this point I decided that I wished to use this group as a research group. They were happy for that, although only later did they sign consent forms. Hence, none of the sessions were recorded, but for the sake of the work, I was monitoring the group and making field-notes. After the successful residential, the group continued to meet monthly, but this proved difficult and eventually stopped. However, it did come together for a third residential in July 2015 and at this point the participants were happy to allow the sessions to be recorded as part of this research. They all signed consent forms, and all the proceedings were recorded and subsequent transcripts made. After the residential, the group did not meet again, despite attempts, and in the end, finished. The analysis will consider the reasons for this, as well as what was achieved in the three years of meeting.

3. The Turkish *Hizmet* – Dialogue Society Group

This group began in 2010, when an invitation was received by the Archbishop of Canterbury's interfaith office from the Dialogue Society, wishing to start a dialogue group in Manchester. This was passed on to me via a number of other people, and I made contact with the Manchester office of the Dialogue Society. I drew a group of interested Christians together and the meetings began, based at the society's Manchester centre. The group is made up of about 10 Christians, some meeting more regularly than others, and a mixed number of Turkish Muslim men, along with a few of their wives and, occasionally, families. It was made up of middle-class educated Christians and Muslims, all well motivated and keen to engage in dialogue. Many are university teachers, post-graduate students or in well-paid jobs. After about two years, the group stopped for about 18 months. Then, about two years ago, with this research in mind, I sought to develop the group again. Some returned to the group, most of the Christians and some of the Muslims, and a committed core group has developed, which continues to meet and outlives the research. It will be interesting to see how this group develops in the long-term. When the group re-assembled, I presented my hopes that they would be involved in the research and all of the group were very pleased to be involved; they readily signed the consent form. The subsequent group meetings have been recorded and transcribed.

4. Other contexts:

There are some other contexts in which I have been involved in interfaith dialogue. While these are not formally research groups, they add to the experience gained over the last five years. Some of these contexts provide particularly interesting and relevant encounters that will be included in the analysis.

Prior to taking up the job in Oldham as Interfaith Officer, I was Rector of St. Bride's Church in Old Trafford, Manchester, which is now a majority Muslim area. I lived there for 19 years and during the last few years I developed several dialogue groups including:

- the Old Trafford Interfaith Group which met for five years, co-led by an Egyptian sheikh, until my departure from the area in August 2011. It met alternately in a church and a mosque and involved leaders from the two religions. A meal was usually included with up to about 12 people regularly involved.
- the Borough of Trafford Interfaith Task Group set up and resourced by staff working for the Metropolitan Borough of Trafford, which I chaired for two years (2009-2011). This group drew together interested leaders from all the religious communities in the borough of Trafford, especially from the two most diverse areas of Altrincham and Old Trafford, both of which had their own separate interfaith groups.

I have subsequently reflected on the development and growth of these groups. These reflections are included in the analysis.

In the last 25 years, the Diocese of Manchester has developed a partnership link with the Diocese of Lahore in Pakistan. I am the vice-chair of the link group in Manchester and have visited the country on seven occasions. On two of these occasions (in February 2014 and November 2015) I have been involved in interfaith dialogue groups in the city of Abbottabad in North-West Frontier Province. These have proved interesting, especially when the Muslim participants have come from a variety of different Islamic traditions, including the religious Taliban. Although not formally part of the research, reflection upon these meetings is included in the analysis. In addition, I was involved with another high-level dialogue meeting held in the Diocese of Lahore, in the Bishop's offices, in 2005. Once again, although not formally part of the research, observations and reflections from this meeting form part of the reflections in the analysis.

Ethical considerations:

Throughout this research ethical issues have remained important. Both for the participants and the researcher himself, issues around the generation of data, its storage and then how it is used are imperative. In all three groups, both

verbal and written consent was gained to allow the groups to be used as 'research groups' and to allow the recording of the sessions. In the case of the Priests-Imams Group, this consent took about three years to achieve, and is perhaps an interesting point to be considered in the building of trust and relationships in the interfaith context. On the other hand, the Turkish Dialogue Group gave its consent immediately once the idea of research was mentioned.

The sensitive nature of all interfaith work meant that in order to build trust an honest and open approach must be taken, even if it meant the process would take longer. However, retrospective consideration of the processes of dialogue is part of the data, as notes on the three groups have been an ongoing part of the Oldham job. The groups are aware of this and when giving consent they were aware that previous meetings would be considered within the research. It is especially important because part of the analysis asks why it took so long to gain consent from the Priests-Imams Group.

It is also important to emphasise that although happy for their names to be used, an undertaking was given that where names were given a pseudonym would be used, thus protecting identities. For some, this was reassuring, although the majority were comfortable with their names being used anyway. Second, the research is carefully stored behind passwords, or electronically in separate storage, or, where appropriate, within locked storage (e.g. filing cabinets).

A number of power issues have been considered and I am aware of and sensitive to these issues. As Gregory affirms, "the researcher has to accept responsibility for the resolution of moral complexities" (Gregory, 2003, p.3). Conscious of my own strength of personality in discussion, as well as the role that I played both as initiator and facilitator of the groups, it has been important that the groups were allowed to develop a life of their own and for individuals within them to take leading roles, both in terms of articulating their beliefs and feelings and also ownership of the group, so that it was not 'my group' but theirs.

To gain written consent, each participant was given an explanation of the research, which I talked through with them, answering questions and clarifying where needed. A letter from the university gave the name and address of the Dean of Humanities to whom they could refer should they have any concerns over the nature of the research or the conduct of the researcher (see appendices 3, 4 & 5).

It is emphasised that:

The relationship with research participants and anonymity, privacy and confidentiality, all relate to the need to ensure that the practitioner's quest for the advancement of knowledge does not override the rights of others (Fox, Martin and Green, p.103).

This has been the goal of this research and remains an important consideration throughout, both in conducting the research and in the analysis of the data.

Analysis of the data

Analysis was conducted using a 'Thematic networks' approach (Attride-Stirling, 2001), which provides a step-by-step method taking the raw data and forming web-like illustrations that summarise the main themes of the texts, drawn from the dialogue sessions. This will enable

a methodical systematization of the textual data and facilitate the disclosure of each step ... aid the organisation of an analysis and its presentation, and allo[w] a sensitive, insightful and rich exploration of a text's overt structures and underlying patterns (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 386).

Thematic networks draw on the principles and structures found in other techniques; for example, grounded theory, "developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), using methods such as participant observation and interviewing. Argumentation

theory (Toulmin, 1958) provides “a structured method for analysing negotiation processes” (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 387), with principles of the progression from accepted data through a warrant to a claim, where “data consists of evidence ... [a]nd warrants are principles and premises upon which the arguments in support of the claim are constructed” (p. 387). Attride-Stirling notes that, “Thematic networks aim to explore the understanding of an issue or the significance of an idea, rather than to reconcile conflicting definitions of a problem” (p.387).

Attride-Stirling continues to note that Toulmin’s terms – claim, warrant and backing – “provide an excellent organizing principle”, and that this core structure has “significant parallels with the three basic elements of grounded theory: concepts, categories and propositions” (Corbin and Strauss, 1990).

Thematic networks provide a way of organising the data, in thematic analysis, where three orders of themes are identified:

1. Basic Themes: this is the most basic or lower-order theme. These are “simple premises characteristic of the data”, and it is noted that on their own they say little about a text. However, in order to make sense they are “read within the context of other Basic Themes.... Together they represent an Organizing (sic) theme” (p.389).
2. Organising Theme: Basic themes organised into clusters of similar issues for a ‘middle-order theme’ that summarises the assumptions of the group of basic themes, thus revealing more of what is going on in the text. Organising Themes “simultaneously group the main ideas proposed by several Basic Themes” (p.389). A group of Organising Themes then constitute a Global Theme.
3. Global Theme: Attride-Stirling describes Global Themes as, “super-ordinate themes that encompass the principal metaphor in the data as a whole” (p. 389). As sets of Organising Themes they present an argument or an assertion about the issue. They make sense of the clusters of Basic Themes, and they inform concerning what the texts

are saying. They both summarise and interpret the texts. It is noted that a set of texts is likely to produce more than one Global Theme, which is “the core of a thematic network”. Equally, an analysis could well result in more than one thematic network (p.389).

Thematic networks are presented graphically as web-like networks (see appendix 7), which gives a fluidity and shows the interconnectedness throughout.

Attride-Stirling identifies six steps in the development and analysis of thematic networks analysis:

Step 1: coding the material. Transcripts are made of the 17 dialogue sessions from three groups that are the subject of the research. These are then coded according to recurring text. This dissects the text in each of the 17 sessions into a manageable number of groups of common words (Bryman & Burgess, 1994, p.177-180).

Step 2: identifying themes. Once coded, themes can be identified from the texts. There are two stages to this, abstracting the themes from the texts and finding common themes, before second, refining these themes to make them “specific enough to be discrete ... and broad enough to encapsulate a set of ideas contained in numerous text segments” (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 392).

Step 3: constructing the networks. Attride-Stirling gives six stages to the development of the networks (See Table 1, p. 87 & appendix 6, p.169). First, arranging the themes into groupings, which will eventually become the thematic networks. Decisions are made concerning how to group themes, according to content. Second, the development of the themes proceeds with the selection of Basic Themes by arranging the coding into groups of themes. This is then followed, third, by drawing together clusters of Basic Themes on shared issues to make Organising Themes. From the Organising Themes the fourth stage is to deduce Global Themes that summarise the main claim and argument of the Organising Themes. Fifth, it is suggested that the process be

illustrated in a non-hierarchical, web-like representation (see appendix 7), before, sixth, verifying and refining the networks, ensuring that the Global, Organising and Basic Themes reflect and support the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p.292-3).

Step 4: describing and exploring the thematic networks. This begins the analysis of the thematic networks in depth, first describing the network, returning to the text and then exploring underlying patterns that begin to appear. This involves re-reading the text, starting from the Global Themes and working back into the text.

Step 5: summarising the thematic network. Once the network has been described, a summary of the main themes and patterns coming from it are described.

Step 6: interpreting the patterns. Lastly, the patterns that have presented themselves from the thematic themes will be interpreted.

The analysis of the data will be described in Chapters 4 and 5.

Reflexivity

Qualitative research which is ethnographic in nature will always generate reflexivity questions. Gilbert considers reflexivity to be “a style of research that makes clear the researcher’s own beliefs and objectives. It considers how the researcher is part of the research process and how he or she contributes to the construction of meaning” (Gilbert, 2008, p. 512).

The process of reflexivity is an attempt to identify, do something about, and acknowledge the limitations of the research: its location, its subjects, its process, its theoretical context, its data, its analysis, and how the accounts recognize that the construction of knowledge takes place in the world not apart from it. ... For us, being reflexive in research is part of being honest and ethically mature in research practice that

requires researchers to “stop being shamans of objectivity” (Ruby, 1980, p. 154).

The researcher is at the centre of this research both as an observer-participant and in the reflection of my own interfaith journey – I am the subject of this research at least in part (see Chapter 6). “A reflexive reading will locate you as part of the data you are generating, and will seek to explore your role and perspective in the process of generation and interpretation of data” (Mason, 2002, p. 149).

In all three research groups my role was pivotal and it is important to understand the implications for the generating of the data. I instigated the groups, not initially for the purpose of the research, but first, because of my interest in interfaith work, and then as part of my work as Interfaith Officer in Oldham. That will have affected the participants; and no matter how careful I have been to allow the voices of others to be heard, mine will also be a key voice in the mix. However, this does not invalidate the data, and in the interpretation, it is important not to lose the influence, role and presence of the researcher. While it is difficult to claim ‘objectivity’, the observations and reflections represent data that enables the research to build towards conclusions.

This chapter has established this research as qualitative and of an ethnographic nature. It has sought to identify its methods and to clarify the types of groups with whom the methods have been explored. Consideration has been given as to the reflexive nature of the research, where the researcher is at the centre, both as researcher and researched. The moral and ethical considerations have been explored. Finally, the method and process of data analysis have been considered. The next chapter considers the research and begins the process to analysis, completed in chapter 5.

Chapter 4 Faith meets faith: the Research

This chapter considers the research, exploring both the make-up of the dialogue groups and the material developing from them; it reaches some conclusions about their effectiveness, which will be further developed in the chapter 5.

The research data and analysis consist of three elements:

- Detailed analysis of three 'dialogue groups' - two in Oldham and one in Manchester - over a five-year period, through field-notes (Mason, 2002, p. 98-99), reflective journalling (Gibbs, 2007, p. 26) and recordings of meetings (Gibbs, p. 71).
- Consideration of the Musalaha Project (Musalaha) in Israel-Palestine and examination of the Six-stage Cycle of Reconciliation (Chapter 4), including a lengthy interview with its director, Salim Munayer. (Unfortunately, a visit to the project was not possible).
- Auto-ethnographic reflection (Gibbs, p. 128) (Chapter 6), through journalling, on the journey of change which I have undergone in this interfaith dialogue process.

The three dialogue groups, building on the brief descriptions in chapter 3 were:

The Priests-Imams Group (PIS)

Jointly chaired by myself and Muhammad*, the Imam and director of the Khadijah Centre, in the Glodwick area of Oldham, this group commenced on Saturday 23 June 2012. The aim of this group was to enable mutual friendship and understanding to develop, and to provide a model of faith leaders cooperating and developing friendships in the expectation that members of the relevant faith communities would see this as a model for their engagement. The group members initially came from Glodwick, an area of Oldham where the disturbances of May 2001 had started, with the first few meetings of this

group taking place exactly opposite the site of the start of these disturbances, at the Khadijah Centre. The first meeting was not closely organised and was considered as a 'meeting for better personal understanding', three Christians and three Muslims shared a meal together. The evening was considered a success and arrangements were made to meet again. Relationships were developed, although no topic was considered.

Upon reflection, this first meeting threw up some fascinating responses. The Imams were very insistent upon telling the Christians about their beliefs; although it was designed to allow mutual understanding, it felt much more like an exercise in daw'a (invitation) on the part of the Muslim leaders. This continued for the next six sessions, which began to alternate between different mosques and churches, until session 7, which seemed to be an 'epiphany' moment. Two things happened:

1. The Muslim leaders started asking the Christian leaders about their faith.
2. At the end of the session, a Muslim leader turned to me and in public said,
'I suppose you know that we would like you to convert'.
Reply: None (except to smile).
Muslim leader: 'And I suppose you'd like us to convert to Christianity'.
Reply: None (except to smile).

This 'epiphany' moment was significant, as if the 'elephant in the room' had been named. The following sessions were different, as the quality of discussion improved significantly. Questions were asked by all participants and a new openness developed. The group membership began to settle down, with familiar faces regularly appearing and relationships becoming established.

Some issues are noteworthy:

1. The make-up of the Muslim contingent was confined to one particular stream within Islam – the ‘Berelvis’ (Bowen, 2016 p.115-134), a traditional expression of South Asian Islam, influenced by Sufism. The leaders of the group made an effort to encourage people from the ‘Deobandi’ (Bowen, 2016 p.11-34) and ‘Salafi’ (Bowen, 2016 p.57-82) streams of Islam to join the group, but it became clear that those Muslims already involved were not comfortable with other streams being represented. Indeed, on one occasion, when a member from the Deobandi stream came and was more confrontational, the Muslim leaders were most uncomfortable. This particular man was not seen at the group again. Likewise, when representatives of the UKIM (United Kingdom Islamic Mission), a Deobandi organisation, attended, although the meeting went well, they did not come again.

On another occasion in discussion with a Bangladeshi-heritage mosque leader, a Mufti in the Deodandi tradition, a significant and influential figure, told me in no uncertain terms that religious dialogue was not possible because Christians are ‘wrong’.

It was noticeable that the Christians were from a range of different traditions, including leaders from Roman Catholic and Free Independent Evangelical Churches. Some members were very conservative in their theology, while others were more liberal. This meant that on occasions the breadth of interpretations of Christianity was marked, and in discussing subjects such as Christian understanding of the Scriptures, a variety of understandings were expressed. Issues of sexuality and gender always provided fruitful discussions and expressed the range of Christian views on these and other subjects. Initially, this surprised our Muslim colleagues, although it became evident over time that this method unearths the broad spectrum of values within the ‘traditions’.

2. The Muslim representatives were solely men, while Christian representatives included women. Although the Muslim leaders were encouraged to bring along their wives and other women, this never happened.

The Muslim participants were very traditional, many having their heritage in the rural areas of Kashmir, around the city of Mirpur, which is where the majority of the community in Glodwick, in Oldham, has its background.

3. When asked for their agreement to take part in the research, it took at least four attempts and about three years into the dialogue sessions before they would agree to let me use the dialogue group as a part of the research. Indeed, it was the event of an overnight stay away together and the four sessions at the retreat house that provided the recordings and subsequent transcripts of the group's interactions. Even after three years of meeting together there was suspicion from some, asking 'would I use the recording against them?'. Eventually they were satisfied and the meetings went well.

4. A few of the Muslim participants struggled with the level of English required to converse easily. This meant that translation was required on some occasions, and provided by other Muslim leaders. This did not hinder the sessions significantly, although it did slow down the process. It meant that Christians often needed to clarify the meanings of words. This situation improved as the group developed, especially with the arrival of an Anglican curate at one of the churches, who was a fluent Urdu speaker.

The four sessions recorded for use in the research were conducted during a 24-hour retreat at Whalley Abbey in Lancashire. Eight Muslim and eight Christian leaders who had been meeting regularly for the previous four years, went away and spent time together discussing topics such as identity, belonging, being a religious minority in a secular state, and issues that are causing tensions (e.g. terrorism).

In terms of the Musalaha six-stage cycle, this Priests-Imams Group had moved from stage 1 to stage 2 but remained in stage 2, the opening-up stage. Initially, the Scriptural Reasoning method of dialogue was useful, but soon the group developed its own methods, largely based on subjects of mutual interest, without specific reference to scriptures. During the time I was

involved, the group moved slowly into the situation where there was serious challenge or question.

In order for stage 3 (i.e. the Withdrawal stage) to take place, a level of honesty and openness to confrontation needs to have been developed, as the challenge of facing uncomfortable aspects of our faith is faced. While the group had developed significantly, it had not reached this place, and I suspect may never reach it, although there were some interesting moments when some sensitive levels of confrontation were experienced, but subsequently productive confrontation was avoided.

The Catalyst Group Weekend (CGW):

In 2012 the new Coalition government was unclear on how to proceed with the policy of integration with minority communities, and the policies of the previous government of providing local authorities with finances to develop cohesion were dropped. This administration appears to have been more interested in avoiding resourcing local government, which it has been considerably squeezing financially; "Having delivered £10 billion of savings in the three years from 2011/2, local authorities have to find the same savings again in the next two years" (Local Government, p.3). Hence, it was decided that the Department for Communities and Local Government (HM Government), under the leadership of Eric Pickles, would fund a project called 'Near Neighbours' (Church Urban Fund). Near Neighbours has two key objectives:

- Social interaction to develop positive relationships in multi-faith areas; i.e. to help people from different faiths to get to know and understand each other better.
- Social action to encourage people of different faiths and of no faith to come together for initiatives that improve their local neighbourhood (Church Urban Fund).

Near Neighbours is administered through the Church Urban Fund (CUF), on the grounds that the Church of England has branches in every community in

England, and clearly the government has trusted CUF to use the finances correctly. Near Neighbours sponsored a number of projects, including the Catalyst Project, a young adult leadership programme which aimed to draw together into dialogue 18-30 year- old members of different faiths. In the north of England, the areas targeted for Near Neighbours support initially were Bradford, Burnley and Oldham.

In 2012, an invitation was received from the local administrative centre for Near Neighbours at Bradford Churches for Diversity and Dialogue (BCDD) (Bradford Churches for Diversity and Dialogue) in Bradford, to lead a Catalyst group in Oldham. This involved organising a four-day residential for young adults (18-30 years) from different religions who were considering issues of leadership training. The first residential was arranged for Thursday 28 February – Sunday 3 March 2013, with Tariq*, a Myers-Briggs facilitator, from a Muslim heritage, sharing the leading with me. Thirteen participants had agreed to come to the retreat centre at Scargill House, Kettlewell, in the Yorkshire Dales, having attended a preliminary meeting and meal. Those involved included five Christians, four Muslims and four Hindus. On the day, the Hindus were not able to come. However, the weekend was a great success, with excellent leadership and good participation by all involved.

Each person completed a Myers-Briggs personality indicator questionnaire, and discussion revolved around how personality affects leadership and many aspects of our lives. The participants went away encouraged, although, sadly, the group did not continue to meet.

In 2014 Scargill House was booked again and a similar programme was provided for a group comprising: three leaders, the Muslim facilitator, a Hindu youth leader, and myself; three assistant leaders, who had attended the previous year; and ten other participants. The whole group included seven Muslims, four Hindus (including their leader) and five Christians. At one point the group decided that it simply wanted to talk about each other's faiths, rather than follow the programme. This proved to be a significant moment as the

members of the group took responsibility for their own engagement with each other.

Two significant things developed:

1. The members of the group were invited to take part in this research and all responded very positively, signing the consent forms. Although I did not record the sessions, field-notes were taken.
2. The group decided to meet regularly after the residential was finished.

The group did begin to meet monthly, alternating between a mosque, a church and a temple. Each meeting had food, which presented some issues, as the Christians will eat anything, while the Hindus were strict vegetarians, eating no eggs or dairy products, along with no onions or garlic, and the Muslims would only eat halal food. Although a challenge, the group enjoyed many meals together. Following the meal, the group would discuss issues of faith, identity and the challenges of living out their faith in a secular society. Often the group would share in a worship experience, either watching the daily evening temple prayers (Podhanyu), the evening (al-isha) prayers in the mosque or perhaps some songs or Scripture reading in the church.

Within a few months, the meetings became less frequent, and other commitments crowded out some of the participants. First, one of the young Muslim women took a job in London, and the other two, who tended to follow her lead, decided to leave the group. Then, one of the young Hindu men also moved to London, and three of the Christians found that their church commitments prevented their attendance. The group limped on, with mainly the Hindu participants, a couple of Muslims and one Christian. Eventually it was decided to stop the group, although all agreed to another summer residential.

Why had the group stopped meeting? Upon reflection, there were several issues: it was a low priority for some, with church and other commitments

being considered of greater value. This may indicate that the relationships had not been strong enough to provide the incentive to continue to meet. For young adults, early in their working life, the opportunities for jobs is important, especially a move to London. Considering this group's progress along the Musalaha six-stage cycle, it seems clear that stages 1 and 2 had been encountered. Some deep issues had been discussed while on the residential. Some of the group encountered the issues of stage 3, 'Withdrawal'. The issues faced in the discussions were beginning to become tough and more personal, particularly concerning faith. Hence, I consider that while some left the group genuinely due to their commitments, others withdrew because it was becoming too uncomfortable. I know that one person considered deeply whether she could continue and face the issues involved and, impressively, she decided to continue and benefitted from it. Sadly, the group diminished around her.

During the summer of 2015 another residential was organised. Instead of staying away overnight, it was decided that the group would meet at the Castleshaw Centre, in the hills of Saddleworth. Those who were committed to the group met for a Saturday (three sessions) and then on Sunday morning, returning to their homes overnight. The group agreed to allow these meetings to become part of the research and all four sessions were recorded. The group was led by the Hindu youth leader, Kirte*, and me. Topics covered included identity, stereotyping, and views of other faiths. Each shared openly their personal faith experience, their worries and fears. The group consisted of four Hindus, two Muslims and one Christian. The Christian was female, as was one of the Hindus, while the Muslims were all male. During Saturday afternoon, the group went for a long walk around Dove Stones reservoir. This proved to be a most formative time, with the growth of friendships and a deeper appreciation of each other.

Being a positive experience, it was decided that the group would try to meet regularly but it proved impossible; the next time the group met was in late April 2016 for a meal to say farewell to me, as I departed from working in Oldham.

Reflecting upon the group, it is clear that a number of people were significantly affected by it; at least one person encountered the 'Withdrawal' stage and returned, while others did not return. I am told that at least one young Muslim, who was in danger of radicalisation, had moved back into mainstream Islam due to his encounters with other faiths on the Catalyst Project. The hope is that the relationships forged during these Catalyst encounters will give the participants a view of other faiths that may develop healthy relationships in the future.

The Turkish Dialogue Society Group (TDG)

In 2009, I was contacted by Lambeth Palace via the Church of England's Interfaith Centre in Bradford with a request to set up an interfaith group with some Turkish Muslims in Manchester. Following up on this contact, I met with the leaders of Hizmet (Gülen Movement) in Manchester. It was the Manchester branch of the Dialogue Society that requested developing relationships between Christians and Muslims in the city. Under the leadership of Muhammad*, they had recently purchased a centre (a former pub, 'The Star') on Hyde Road on the eastern side of central Manchester and were keen to see it develop as a resource for the local community, as well as for the Turkish community, with after-school lessons, language classes and a pre-school nursery. At the initial meeting, a group of about 10 Christians were drawn together, mainly from contacts who had attended training sessions. About 15 people from the Turkish community in Manchester attended, including women and children. It was a community event, with food and general discussion – a 'get to know you' session – stage 1 on the Musalaha six-stage cycle. Most of those attending had a high level of education: among the Turks, there were an impressive number of PhD graduates and students studying for post-graduate qualifications at Manchester and other universities;

among the Christians, most had at least first degrees and all had attended an advanced course on Christian-Muslim relations entitled 'Encountering the World of Islam' (Swartley, 2005).

In the first few meetings we used Scriptural Reasoning methods, both to understand each other's faiths and to develop relationships. There was a genuine willingness to engage at some depth from the outset, with little of the suspicion encountered in other groups. However, as the group evolved, the numbers of Turkish participants dropped and it was clear that some were not interested in the depth of relationship and challenges that were developing. The group had gathered members of Hizmet from across the north of England, with some travelling from Hull, Leeds and Ellesmere Port, at some cost to themselves both in terms of time and expense. The group met alternately at the Star Centre and at a church, often at St. Bride's Church, Old Trafford, where I was the rector at the time. By considering each other's Scriptures, similar to Scriptural Reasoning, topics discussed included: Abraham, Adam, David, Moses, Noah, sacrifice, others figures of common interest and respective festivals (at the appropriate times). In September 2011, a group of Christians were invited to Istanbul as guests of Hizmet, and my wife, myself and three others spent four days being shown round Istanbul by members of Hizmet who lived in the city. In addition to visiting the sites (Hagia Sophia, the Blue Mosque, the Hippodrome, Topkapi and others) we spent a day visiting organisations affiliated to Hizmet – Fatih University, the Dialogue Society, the Journalists and Writers Foundation, Welfare and Development organisations, such as the Kimse Yok Mu Association, and Zaman, their daily newspaper. It was at this point that we became aware of the strength and commitment of the members of Hizmet. Sadly, events since then have meant that these organisations have had to close in Turkey, although some continue to operate in other countries.

The Dialogue Group continued and moved almost effortlessly from stage 1 to stage 2 of the Musalaha cycle. There was a commitment to dialogue from both

Turkish and English members of the group. However, it began to run out of steam, and numbers dropped, particularly from the Turkish side. Eventually, the two key leaders moved to London and the group stopped meeting. Reflecting on the process, good relationships had developed and the group had covered most of the issues that were held in common and were beginning to consider issues where there would be serious disagreement. The group would have become a lot harder and more challenging, both in terms of relationships and hard questions about our own religions. This coincided with the leaders moving south and we all withdrew. This was in the summer of 2012.

Contact was maintained, especially with the new Manchester Dialogue Society coordinator. It was agreed for the group to meet again in late 2014 at the Star Centre. Most of the Christians who had been involved previously were in attendance, along with a couple of former missionaries in Turkey, who had recently returned to the UK and who spoke Turkish. A core group of seven Christians and four Muslims from the previous group was established, with new students occasionally attending from local universities. The group very quickly renewed the depth of relationships from two years previous. What was clear to me was that there was both a determination to develop deep relationships and a willingness to engage with some of the hard issues. Upon reflection, while considering the Musalaha cycle, it seems that the group had moved out of stage 3 (Withdrawal) and into stage 4 (Identity reclaimed).

At this point I discussed this research, asking the participants if they were willing to be involved. There was no hesitation from any in the group. I suspect this was for two reasons: first, the levels of trust were very high, having attended many meetings together; and, second, most of the participants have an academic background and hence were well aware of the need for ethical safeguards and signed permissions to be granted. All were happy to take part in the on-going dialogue and to contribute to the research.

Consequently, between 29 August 2015 and 24 April 2016, eight dialogue meetings were held, alternately in the Star Centre and at the Nazarene Theological College. Field-notes were taken and the sessions recorded. The results of these sessions appear in the analysis to follow. The topics considered were taken from the syllabus of the Musalaha curriculum including identity (Who am I?), two sessions on history, power, forgiveness, stereotyping and justice.

However, the most recent meetings have been taken up with consideration of the situation facing Hizmet in Turkey. Hizmet had enjoyed support from the Justice and Development Party (AKP party) (Justice and Development Party) of the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan since his election in 2002. Historically, Hizmet had contributed to the education system in Turkey in significant ways; many of the leaders in government, the civil service, the judiciary and the armed forces had been educated in their schools or in one of their three universities. Many were either active members, or strongly sympathetic to the aims of Hizmet, which was a soft and peaceful Islam, with strong support for democracy, looking west to Europe in its emphasis. Hizmet had strongly supported Erdoğan and the present government when they were first elected and in subsequent elections. However, relations between Erdoğan and Fethullah Gulen, who is now living in America receiving medical attention, deteriorated during 2014/15, when there was a clampdown on Hizmet in Turkey. Then, when an attempted coup took place on 15 July 2016, Hizmet was blamed (The Guardian, 16 July 2016), upward of 70,000 Hizmet supporters were dismissed from their jobs and over 30,000 imprisoned, awaiting trial. Requests for the extradition of Gulen from the USA have been made, but so far rejected. Both Gulen and members of Hizmet reject the claims that they instigated the attempted coup. In fact, members of this

Dialogue Group consider that the attempted coup was a 'set-up' by the Erdoğan government in order to blame Hizmet.

The Turkish members of the group were distressed by these events in their homeland, with relatives imprisoned or dismissed from their jobs. One member of the group discovered his name on a list of 'terrorists', meaning that should he return, he would be arrested. Another member of the group left Turkey a day before the clampdown and was dismissed from the university in Istanbul where he was the Dean; his wife and children remain in Turkey. The group has been able to provide empathic support and encouragement to Turkish Muslim friends who find themselves rejected by and unable to return to, their 'home country'. The depth of relationship forged over the last few years makes this group a supportive and helpful place for those in pain over the recent events in Turkey.

This group has provided an interesting exercise in dialogue, but it has become much more as the participants share their pain in deeply trusting relationships. Reflecting on the process in the light of the Musalaha cycle, the group has re-emerged through stage 4 (Reclaiming Identity), and is working its way through stages 5 and 6, as it engages on a more challenging level with the issues of how we view ourselves, each other and our histories, with integrity and then where to go from here. It is now asking how it might develop further with the issues of 'taking steps' – stage 6. It will be interesting to monitor how it develops through stages 5 and 6 and beyond.

Interview with Salim Munayer (all quotations are taken from the interview).

An interview with Salim Munayer, the director of Musalaha, and pioneer of the six-stage cycle of reconciliation, was held on Friday 8th January 2016 at the Nazarene Theological College, Didsbury, Manchester, where he was speaking at a conference.

After a wide ranging discussion concerning our respective work in Manchester and Israel/Palestine the interview approached the issues around the Musalaha six-stage cycle. For the purpose of this thesis five significant issues were discussed.

1. Adapting the model for the interfaith context.

‘The only difference comes when relating to faith. I use very much the Abrahamic moral values that Brian Cox (Cox, 2011) has developed and others have used, basically Galatians 5.’ Munayer is indebted to Brian Cox, which is why his is included in the review of different interfaith models. ‘So if you say the Abrahamic moral values, you’re OK’. It is clear that the basic Musalaha model is used but care is taken to focus on values that are commonly held, from a common source – Abraham. In the research groups the commonality of values was an important means of developing trust, and, although not deliberately stated, all three of the research groups were able to operate effectively because of shared values.

2. Social issues around developing a dialogue group.

Discussion developed around how the groups were selected and who should join them. Both Munayer and I agreed that ‘it’s the Christians who normally give the hardest time’. I reflect that it was far more difficult to encourage Christians to engage with the Catalyst group. Munayer noted from the conference, ‘that was an interesting observation this morning that Christians are the most resistant – they are hard work!’. He goes on to suggest that ‘it is easier to bring Muslims to meet, much more. It’s fear, prejudice, losing position, somebody should do research as to why Christians are so resistant’. He reflected that the different groups with which I was working present different issues, particularly social. He maintained that levels of education and similar social class make for successful dialogue groups. For example he identified that the Turkish dialogue group was much more likely to proceed at a faster pace, because both the Christians and Muslims were middle-class and educated, thereby sharing similar social values. In contrast it was suggested that the Priest and Imams group would be a slower process, because many of the Imams are poorly educated and from the Indian sub-continent. It proved to be exactly so, although both groups continue well after the research has concluded, albeit at different speeds.

3. The importance of the 'Withdrawal' stage.

Munayer emphasised the importance of stage 3 'Withdrawal'. 'Before I married Kay I said I'm going to America for a month's trial, during this time I'm going to pray whether we get married or not. We withdraw for self-reflection, should I pay the cost. Withdrawal isn't divorce. Some will come back after 20 years... our withdrawal is acute and very strong.'

He noted that 'you can be in withdrawal and after a while you drift. When you withdraw what do you do? Are you studying, are you praying about it, are you meeting other people?' He insisted that the participants need encouragement and need to know that 'no-one is trying to shut you out'. He suggested that training is needed to help people through this stage, noting that 'being prejudiced is quite a comfortable place' and that 'letting go of that (prejudice) can be vulnerable'. However, you cannot be in that comfortable place all the time, and failure to confront the hard questions will have 'consequences that will appear a lot further down the road'. The changes of mind-set that come through confronting issues of prejudice 'take time to manifest themselves in behaviour'.

Munayer affirmed that 'when you hit the withdrawal, folk then come back into where they want to continue and things go quicker'. That was the experience of this research.

4. Identity matters.

'Identity transformation are key things for the future.' During the research, especially in stage 2, issues around identity took up significant amounts of dialogue time. Munayer sought to apply this research in its context, but provided an 'outsider' view of some of the issues. For example, 'British Muslims and British Christians – what is meant to be British, English, Scots, European and that is where there is a debate. When you formulate your identity, if you put only Christian or Muslim it is very hard.' However he maintained that 'if you bring the third thing, the new community of the people of God you can come with a distinct identity.' In our discussion we compared the opportunities in the UK with those in Israel/Palestine as well as in

Pakistan. The contrast was stark, 'our political system is a Jewish state, so anyone who is not defined as Jewish is out, does not have a place here'. However the political system in Britain 'is beginning to define what is British; so English, British history, values are important... when you become a British citizen you need to know the names of the Kings and Queens'. In the groups the common interest and identity will not be nationality or heritage it will be 'the place of God'. This way how it worked out in practice.

5. The 'Circum narrative' between two communities.

Munayer contrasted the way different communities process their history and narrative. He emphasised the necessity of learning to be 'critical about history'. He noted that 'my community is not doing this. This is the shortcoming of my community... when you divide the people, it is circum narrative'. 'What needs to be changed? We need to see through the others' eyes. In terms of historical stuff, it enables the other to view history from my perspective and vice versa.'

He admitted that sadly, 'in my country they talk about 1948, 1967 – they talk about war only'. However he pointed to a positive development food saying that, 'Israelis didn't used to eat houmas' and that schnitzel has become part of Palestinian children's diet'. 'Food is a very good way as it's pretty neutral.' It should be noted that in a three research groups shared meals at every session formed an important focal point for building relationships.

The research material

Over the course of three years, field-notes and reflective journals were kept on the three dialogue groups. Over the last year, recordings were made of 16 dialogue sessions: eight with the Turkish Dialogue Society Group; four with each of the Priests-Imams and Catalyst groups. In addition, a recording of an interview with Salim Munayer, director of the Musalaha Project, was made and transcribed.

Analysis of the research material

Using a Thematic Network approach, (Attride-Stirling, 2001) transcripts of all 16 recordings were made. These were then coded with the significant and most frequent words in each dialogue session identified. The codes were analysed and drawn together into Basic Themes, the “most basic or lower-order theme that is derived from the textual data” (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 388). These Basic Themes identify a commonality between codes. (Appendix 6 gives the transition from Codes to the 14 Basic themes identified).

14 Basic Themes were identified: Faith; Religion; Institutions; the State; Nationality; Belonging; the Human Condition; Outsider; Evils; Inner-life; Emotions-feelings; Who am I?/Identity; History; and Forgiveness.

Having identified 14 themes out of the codes from 16 dialogue sessions, the analysis considered arranging these into Organising Themes. These are “middle-order themes that organise the Basic Themes into clusters of similar issues” (Attride-Stirling, p. 389). Finally, these Organising Themes are arranged into Global themes, that “encompass the principal metaphors in the data as a whole” (Attride-Stirling, p. 389).

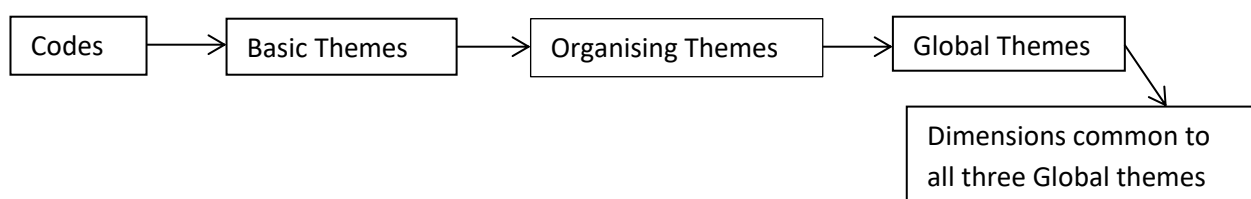
Table 1:

<i>Basic Themes</i>	<i>Organising Themes</i>	<i>Global Themes</i>
1. <u>Faith</u>	<u>The Metaphysical</u>	Interfaith Dialogue involves real depth – considering all aspects of the human condition:
2. <u>Religion</u>	- Faith	
3. <u>Institutions</u>	- Religion - Inner-life	
4. <u>The State</u>	<u>Political</u>	<u>Physical</u> – how we organise ourselves.
5. <u>Nationality</u>	- The State - Institutions	
6. <u>Belonging</u>		
7. <u>Human Condition</u>	<u>Humankind</u>	<u>Spiritual</u> or inner-life – dealing with the inner person, how we see ourselves, and live at peace with ourselves.
8. <u>Outsider</u>	- Human Condition - Emotions-feelings	
9. <u>Evils</u>		
10. <u>Inner-life</u>	<u>Barriers</u>	<u>Social</u> – where we belong and how we live at peace with each other (what prevents that).
11. <u>Emotions – feelings</u>	- Evils - Outsider	
12. <u>Who am I??/Identity</u>		
13. <u>History</u>	<u>Identity</u>	
14. <u>Forgiveness</u>	<u>Forgive/Reconciliation</u>	
	- Forgiveness	

In the following chapter, I will extrapolate the data under each of the organising themes in more detail, drawing on the material that generated the basic themes.

Chapter 5 The Analysis in detail - So where did the dialogue lead?

Having identified the Organising Themes, this chapter extrapolates the most significant. It then analyses emerging Global Themes, identifying and analysing eight clear dimensions – as depicted below.



Three Organising Themes (See appendix 6) have been selected for further analysis. I consider these to be the most important; they are key drivers in the dialogue and provide the focus for further exploration when considering the Global Themes. However, there remains plenty of material for future analysis.

1. The importance of Faith as the means of forging a common purpose, enabling dialogue, is coupled with the overlapping theme of Religion, in an increasingly secular society.

2. Arguably, the most significant theme Identity, is considered through the lenses: 'Who am I?', 'Nationality', 'Belonging' and 'History'.

3. The final theme represents the desired outcome of forgiveness/reconciliation and is considered through the model of the Musalaha six-stage cycle of reconciliation. No research group has yet reached this outcome, although the Turkish Dialogue group is near.

Although not considered in depth here, other Organising Themes could provide opportunity for further research, such as the differing views of human

nature, the dividing barriers we put up, the role of the state and its institutions, family life and power.

1. Faith

In all three groups, 'Faith' was a significant theme in the dialogue sessions. This was no surprise, as the groups had been deliberately chosen from people of genuine and often deep faith. The centrality of personal faith and a willingness to share both beliefs and personal experiences was important and distinctive, whether formal religion or personal faith. Although Faith and Religion are considered as different themes, there is significant overlap between them. The distinction between them is the difference between personal faith and institutional religion. Personal faith was the driver for dialogue in all groups, as this quote from a Muslim member of the Turkish Dialogue Group, during session 2, illustrates:

In the Qur'an a verse saying that "we created different tribes and nations to get to know each other" (Q.49:13). And if we look at what we are saying we interpret that he created different nations not to fight with each other, but this is what we are doing in practice and this is what our religion is about – get to know each other.

Issues grouped together in this theme include (i) different views of God; (ii) heaven and hell; (iii) centrality of faith to participants. The Catalyst Group was the only group where three faiths engaged with each other (Muslim, Hindu and Christian). In all groups, once stage 1 (Beginning Relationships) was negotiated and introductions made, trust developed quickly and religious issues presented, which enabled honest sharing.

However, upon reflection, the place of sincere and strongly-held personal faith was vital in enabling all groups to function well; it was the 'glue that held them together'. While significant differences were inevitably identified, the common depth of personal conviction carried the participants through circumstances

where hurtful offence could have been given or taken. For example, from the outset the Catalyst Group participants talked openly about their beliefs (CGW 1 & 2). Quickly issues of idolatry were raised, especially when visiting a Hindu Temple for their evening worship (Podhanyu), where the gods are put to rest for the night; there was polite listening but it was clear that there were profound disagreements. Muslims consider this shirk (blasphemy) and it is anathema to Christians. Yet the strength of the relationships meant that although hurts were felt, and sometimes gently expressed, with occasional vehemence, everyone was committed to each other. Likewise, when Christians talked about Jesus as 'Son of God', the Muslims were really quite uncomfortable, and said so, but no offence was taken, because no deliberate offence was being given. Point 7 of the Ethical Guidelines for Christian and Muslim Witness in Britain (see Appendix 2) – "We will speak clearly and honestly about our faith, even when that is uncomfortable or controversial", seemed an important principle that enabled honesty and openness to grow.

Religion

Although overlapping with 'Faith', which I describe as 'a personal, individual devotion to one's respective religion' (see p. 144), 'Religion' considered some distinctive issues, including (i) respect for all peoples, (ii) place of religion in society, (iii) secularism and its relationship with religion, (iv) moral issues, (v) causing offence, (vi) divisions within each faith.

Issues around the place of religion in society are complex, but were considered important in all the groups; the Priests-Imams group focused on marginalisation of religion in the secular state: 'The benefits and importance of religion are not being valued ...' (session 4). There was strong concern that the UK once considered a 'Christian' country, had lost its faith. Often it would seem that the Muslims and Hindus were mourning the loss of religion, and for the Christians, at times, this felt like the blame was directed at them:

... a couple of hundred years ago the church was at the heart of the community and we didn't have to work to engage with the community because people were there... we were the heart of the community. (Christian- PIS – session 4).

The rise of atheism and its expression in the secular state caused considerable discussion, especially, although not exclusively, in the Priests-Imams Group. For many for deeply religious societies, the marginalisation of religion in the UK was extremely worrying.

I shall consider this issue in more detail. The relationship of secularism to religion is complex. Steve Bruce in *God is Dead* explores the rise of secularism and its relationship to religion, proposing what he calls the 'Secularization Paradigm'. He maps out the history of the rise of secularism from its roots in the Protestant Reformation and draws on sociologists such as Weber (1976), Berger (1969), Wilson (1990), Luckmann (1970), and others, to plot the courses that have brought about the West's present secularism. He suggests that individualism, rationality and, especially, the Protestant Work Ethic, were the seeds that became the rational capitalism that underlies secularism today. Considering Weber's work, Bruce points out that a Protestant culture need not necessarily "produce capitalism in any circumstance: the material conditions had to be right" (Bruce, 2002, p. 5). He continues,

once rational capitalism was well established and its virtues obvious, it could be adopted by people with ... different psychologies in ... different cultures ... that is, many social innovations, once established, become free of their origin (Bruce, p. 5).

Bruce maintains that the rationalising tendencies of Protestant Christianity "created space for secular alternatives" (Bruce, p. 7). He also supports Wilson, who argues that,

religion has its source in, and draws its strength from, community. As society rather than community has increasingly become the locus of the individual's life, so religion has been shorn of its functions (Bruce, p. 13).

The 1980s and 1990s, especially during the premiership of Margaret Thatcher saw this process develop still further as she maintained "there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families" (Women's Own Magazine, 30 October 1987). With the breakdown of communities and the rise of individualism, the privatisation and compartmentalisation of religion became inevitable. As Luckmann maintains, "Once religion is defined as a 'private affair', the individual may choose from the assortment of 'ultimate' meanings as he sees fit" (Luckmann, 1970, p. 99).

Bruce takes the argument further:

The privatization of religion removes much of the social support that is vital to reinforce beliefs, makes the maintenance of distinct lifestyles very difficult, weakens the impetus to evangelize and encourages a de facto relativism that is fatal to shared beliefs (Bruce, p. 20).

With this privatisation of religion and the breakdown of shared beliefs comes a confusion of moral consensus, where the individual makes their own set of ethical judgments. Values have replaced morals, which are then enforced by laws.

Bruce concludes his argument by saying that, "individualism, diversity and egalitarianism in the context of liberal democracy undermine the authority of religious beliefs" (Bruce, p. 30). Bruce is not saying that religion will disappear, as Berger had initially maintained (Berger, 1969). However, by 1999 Berger had changed his opinion: "the assumption that we live in a secularized world is false. The world today ... is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever" (Berger, 1999, p. 2).

The religious resurgence in the UK has gone hand-in-hand with an increased secularisation within society as a whole (Graham, 2013). Bruce identifies 'counter-tendencies', as he maintains that, "religion diminishes in social significance ... and loses personal salience except where it finds work to do other than relating individuals to the supernatural" (Bruce, p. 30).

Bruce then suggests two scenarios relevant for interfaith dialogue. First, "cultural defence", where religion remains 'a powerful social force' in group identity, 'primarily of an ethnic or national character', means that secularization is 'inhibited' (Bruce, p. 31). For some communities, religion provides a defence against secularising influences; for example, in Ireland, Poland, and some immigrant communities in the UK. Second, in 'cultural transition', where cultural identity is threatened by major transition, such as migration, religion may provide a source 'asserting a new claim to a sense of worth' (Bruce, p. 34). He notes that:

[migrants] often fell away from observance before families and cultural institutions were established, but they often became ... perhaps even more observant than they were at home ... when these were in place (Bruce, p. 35).

Bruce asserts that "modernization can create a new role for religion as a socializing agent in times of rapid social change" (p. 36), but also maintains that as migrant communities "become English in every other respect (except religion), the third generation of Muslims is also approaching the English level of religious indifference" (p. 39). There were no third-generation migrant participants in the three research groups. The Imams in the Priests and Imams Group were first-generation migrants, while both the Hindus and the Muslims in the Catalyst Group were second-generation; the Muslim participants in the Turkish Dialogue Group were all first-generation economic migrants. Whether Bruce's assertion becomes a reality, remains to be seen. For the participants in the three research groups, their religion remained a significant source of identity and stability while in transition.

While the UK continues on the path of becoming both more secular and more religious these issues will remain important, and no doubt the subject of much further dialogue. The focus of this thesis is the relevance of the Musalaha six-stage cycle to the UK context. The model has the participants' personal faith devotion at the core of the engagement, and, this is especially important for those involved in employment outside of a religious context, where they are living and working in an increasingly secular, non-religious and sometimes anti-religion environment. The six-stage cycle provides opportunities for participants to share their frustrations, especially in stage 2, and then by stage 6 to have determined how, individually and collectively, they might find expression for their religious convictions in practical ways.

Within the criticisms of UK secularisation some of the Muslim participants, especially the Priests and Imams Group, raised serious concerns about moral influences:

This is about indecency; children are unfortunately being taught about indecency through the education system. Instead of teaching your child how to become a good citizen ... able to create a solid family who will benefit society, they are being taught to become tolerant towards homosexuality and safe sex (PIS – session 4).

Issues around general moral guidance for young people were frequently raised by all participants. In the Church of England report, *Moral, But No Compass* the researchers came to the conclusion that “the State is planning without vision or roots and not even recognising its own creed of ‘what works’” (Davis, 2008, p. 95).

There were times of honest confrontation, where, on many occasions, offence could have been taken, although participants chose not to take offence. Rather, they listened, seeking mutual understanding. It was noted that while some Muslims will often protest about insults to their faith and its founder, similar insults are experienced by members of all the faiths represented:

We're talking about insulting Muhammad, but equally it is a challenge for those who passionately believe that Jesus is God to hear a Muslim say that is not true ... where do you draw the line in censorship? (Christian - PIS – session 4).

Censorship was mentioned many times. For some Muslim participants, there was tension between valuing the freedom of the UK press that uncovered corruption and held people accountable, while being deeply uncomfortable when things that were perceived to be insulting to their religion were published.

There was open discussion of tensions within their faiths. The Christians spoke openly about historic divisions – Roman Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox and the many denominational differences; the Hindus shared their many differences: demi-gods, castes, regions of India and the challenges faced by the diaspora; some of the Muslim participants, especially in the Catalyst Group, shared their frustrations at differences within Islam, especially the rise of radical Islam.

While there was an acknowledgement of the part played by religion in the differences, there was awareness that there are other factors; political, historic, social and others, which contribute to the situations faced in many parts of the world: "Muslim-Christian conflict is a big one. It is not the religion as the essence, but religion is being used deceptively" (Muslim - TDG – session 4).

2. Identity

Considered within this Organising Theme the Basic Themes of Who am I? Nationality, Belonging and History (both personal and national) have considerable overlap and lie at the heart of a person's understanding of themselves; they provided a rich source of discussion.

The term 'identity' describes the way a person views themselves as a 'separate and unique individual' (Musalaha, p. 63). Identity develops over time, through both personal reflection and interaction with others, through relationships with family, peers, leaders, teachers and others. Volf affirms that, "the identity of a person is inescapably marked by the particularities of the social setting in which he or she is born and develops" (Volf, 1996, p. 19). A person may have multiple identities, according to context and circumstances. Munayer defines identity in four ways:

1. How a person defines who they are.
2. People's concepts of who they are – what sort of person they are and how they relate to others.
3. The way individuals and groups define themselves, and are defined by others on basis of race, ethnicity, language and culture.
4. The relationship of the other to oneself (Munayer, p. 67).

Who am I?

Consideration of the way members of the groups defined themselves highlighted various tensions produced by the different influences on their identities. The groups recognised that different influences, such as ethnicity, religion, heritage, and gender shape our identities, and intergenerational differences were explored, especially in the Catalyst Group, who watched the film *Yasmin* which tells the fictional story of a Bradford family in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

Different conflicting worldviews were experienced in the school environment, home and place of worship, where there are different pedagogies. Young people are having to inhabit different worlds, and, on occasions, to choose between competing truth claims. For some, the tension between these can present significant dilemmas and challenges:

And I would like the option of having multiple identities. My mother was born in India. So that's important for my identity. It's important that I

have Scottishness in my identity. It's important that I was born near London. It's important that I love where I live now. And I would like to take the good from each of those and celebrate them in who I am. (Christian - PIS – session 3).

While there was an appreciation that the UK was generally a safe and welcoming place to live, a Muslim participant in the Catalyst Group talked of some of the older generation in their community making plans to possibly leave the country, 'if it turned against Muslims' (Muslim - CWG – session 2). However, the participants recognised that they had nowhere to go; they were British, and here to stay. Some of the Turks in the Dialogue Group were in a strange place: most of them had joint British/Turkish nationality; they did not consider themselves to be British, '... but I'm not an immigrant, I'm a Turkish ex-pat' (Muslim -TDG – session 7). However, at the present time, due to the political situation in Turkey, they are unable to return there.

The issues around nationality were important. Conversations seemed to return not just to an individual's nationality but to the power and influence of different nations. Some people seemed acutely aware of the lived contradictions between their sense of identity and the pressure to conform to those norms and values associated with the West, and the UK in particular:

nationality – if you are deemed to have dual heritage of some kind that has an effect on who you are and how you think to a degree. That's the problem we have in my culture. A lot of the other generations still think that they live in India – we don't ...I see people wanting to be more British than the British... (Hindu - CGW – session 3).

For some, the tensions are great and lead to a very different view of the world, with national identity and nationalism causing tensions. Some of the participants with Turkish heritage no longer considered themselves as Turkish:

I've learnt a lesson – if you don't settle your local problems you will never get anywhere! That's why I came from a Turkish national to a global national.... So for me I believe that out of this tornado I said no and that's why I feel less attached to my country – I'm more attached to humanity. I am trying to say this from my heart' (Muslim - TDG – session 4).

However, there was an increasing resignation towards international conflicts, superpower hegemony and worsening internal unrest; and, despite religious instructions not to fight, for all three religions the situation is building up to become a major crisis:

It is so sad and I really feel pain when I say in the 21st century human beings have not accumulated the intelligence that stops repeating the same cycle [wars] again and again. Yet we are in this situation. I thought my kids won't see that but they are seeing it at the moment (Muslim - TDG – session 2).

Despite this pessimistic view of world events, there was a commitment to engage between religions as a model of harmonious interfaith relationships.

Belonging

Closely related to nationality is the sense of belonging that sits within a person's identity: (i) inter-generational tensions, (ii) a sense of 'home' and 'homeland' and (iii) how someone 'fits in'.

For some, there was a realisation that the homeland they left 30 years ago had changed, which, when visited, can produce a nostalgic bewilderment and a deep sense of mourning for something that was lost:

They have a strong nostalgic view of their homeland, but their homeland changes and then they feel completely alienated – they have

nowhere to belong. They hold on to a past image. (Hindu - CWG – session 3).

There was much talk of 'fitting in', along with a growing realisation that they may not 'fit in' anywhere, leading to recognition for some that the UK presents the best 'fit'.

A Muslim member of the Turkish Dialogue Group described the sense of belonging by means of shapes and colours:

You know it's the British shape – it's a triangle. I fit in as a triangle. If I go to Turkey, it's a circle. I don't fit in there. But the colour is the same. It matches the colour. I am certain – but when you put me here, it's say blue and I'm red.... The shape fits in but the colour doesn't matter. If you go to Turkey, the colour matches but not the shape though (Muslim - TDG - session 6).

Identity provides a sense of belonging and self-worth, but what happens when that identity is challenged? For example, when negativity is expressed towards a person's culture or ethnicity they may well feel hurt and offended, which in turn undermines their identity, as Fearon expresses; "it undermines a person's basis for thinking well of himself or herself" (Fearon, p. 24). At the very least, this will challenge relationships, and may result in strong, even violent reactions.

Integral to a person's identity is also their personal and national history.

History

The groups asked questions about their personal histories, and then about what to do with the uncomfortable elements in their histories. For some of the participants, British history presented significant issues, while for others this revolved around events in the Indian sub-continent, including the colonial era, such as the independence settlement that brought about the creation of

Pakistan, the unresolved issues around Kashmir and subsequently Bangladesh. For the Turkish participants, the Ottoman period, the immediate aftermath of the First World War, and the present struggles, presented issues for reflection and discussion. Within the Asian heritage participants, there appeared to be a strong oral culture, passing on history, both in the mosque and within the family. There is a need to keep their roots 'back in the old country', through stories and visits. Embedded in the religious culture is the re-enactment of events in history that shape communities; for example, the festivals that are celebrated, Eids and Diwali; the weekly Shabbat meal or Holocaust day; Christmas and Easter. Christians remember and celebrate the focal events of their faith each Sunday at Mass or Communion.

The English-heritage participants seemed to have a much shorter view of history. A Christian member of the Turkish Dialogue Group who lived in Turkey for more than ten years, recalls:

I've met people who tell me that so-and-so were killed in the Crusades, and they can tell you who was killed and who killed them, because it is carried from generation to generation (Christian -TDG – session 6).

The Catalyst Group and the Turkish Dialogue Group both identified the differences between history and narrative, acknowledging that much of what is regarded as history is probably narrative, which will have elements of accuracy but will have been altered through re-telling.

When we look at history there is a difference between what historians try to do, which is gather the objective truth of what happened, and what might be considered narrative (Christian - TDG – session 4).

Some participants asked whether the sins of history are passed on to the present generation. There appeared to be significant responses, as Muslim voices in the Turkish Dialogue Group felt that, 'No one is responsible for your

ancestors or someone else's crime ... this was in the past – we can't understand all the circumstances' (Muslim - TDG – session 5).

However, as the discussion progressed, there was a realisation that history cannot be ignored, 'so these memories are alive and the injustices remain alive' (Christian - TDG – session 5). Muslim participants began to understand the effects of history in the present; 'It doesn't mean that we wash our hands of our father's sins' (Muslim - TDG – session 5).

This led to a sense of corporate responsibility for the felt results of the events of history: "You may not be personally responsible for it but it's about a corporate responsibility, because the results are still felt" (Muslim - TDG – session 4). At the same time, the group was beginning to consider how to work through the effects of history: "What you are saying is that we don't have to be trapped by our history, but people are!" (Christian - TDG – session 4).

There was a growing awareness that people of faith are in a privileged position, both in being able to face up to the results of history and in seeking to resolve the issues that they raise;

We are in a position to do something about it, particularly we who are real believers, if you like ...because we are willing to face up to our history and to deal with some of the issues around it and not let our children get distorted by some of these [narratives] (Christian - TDG – session 4).

The Turkish Dialogue Group, which had developed beyond stage 3 of the Musalaha cycle, was willing to look at issues on a deeper level than the other groups. Having asked the questions about our histories and recognised some of the unpleasant aspects of those histories, and what to do with them, the group considered what is understood by the terms associated with forgiveness and reconciliation from both Muslim and Christian perspectives.

3. Forgiveness/Reconciliation

Returning into stage 4 implies that the participants are willing to engage at depth. Munayer describes the process as 'learning to Embrace the Other' (Munayer, p. 230). He takes the model developed by Miroslav Volf, who describes embrace as:

The will to give ourselves to others and 'welcome' them, to readjust our identities to make space for them, [and it occurs] prior to any judgement about others except that of identifying ... their humanity (Volf, 1996, p. 29).

Volf gives four elements of 'embrace': opening the arms, waiting, closing the arms, and re-opening the arms. Opening the arms makes oneself vulnerable, accessible to the other and creates space for others to join the process. Second, time is given for reciprocal opening of arms and the arms are then closed. The participants hold each other – embrace is taking place - but for the embrace to be successful, the arms need to re-open, so that the 'otherness, difference and uniqueness can remain' (Volf, p. 143-144). This description gives a good illustration of aspects of the process that the Turkish group travelled through, and returned to on occasions.

The group considered the subject of forgiveness, understood as a decision that is made and a process that is undertaken:

It's a decision you have to make but it has to come through stages ... It doesn't matter whether they've said sorry a thousand times. Sometimes that's why it is a process (Muslim – TDG – session 3).

Some Muslims and Christians in the group responded to this question of forgiveness by exploring their faith perspectives:

You can forgive them and they are forgiven. Like we know that through the cross we are forgiven, but whether we accept that – it's whether we

are repentant and say, 'Yea I did something that was really crappy then and I'm really sorry.' (Christian - TDG – session 3).

Some of the Muslim participants were clear that in addition to being forgiven by God, the person who has been wronged must forgive.

Some Muslim participants were keen to emphasise that intention was important:

Your intentions do count and I like the English saying – 'actions speak louder than words' – as much as you say sorry you keep doing it – it's not going to change, is it? If you want forgiveness you need to do something about it. Just saying sorry is not enough... (Muslim - TDG – session 3).

Forgiveness is only one aspect in a process. Genuine forgiveness will lead to repentance and restitution. It was pointed out that the word repentance comes from the Greek word, *metanoia*, meaning 'a change of mind', that brings about a new direction in life (Christian- TDG – session 6).

The process of reconciliation includes forgiveness, repentance and restitution. It "is not possible unless we are comfortable with who we are, and can open ourselves and create space to include others in our identities" (Munayer, p. 233). The Turkish Dialogue Group has taken significant steps in this process over the last two years. The syllabus in Appendix 1 gives the direction of the discussions that will hopefully enable a common identity and a depth of reconciliation to develop.

The Global Themes

Attride-Stirling describes Global Themes as "super-ordinate themes that encompass the principal metaphors in the data as a whole" (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 389). The Organising Themes have given a picture of the subjects and depth of discussion within the Musalaha six-stage dialogue model. The

Global Themes are ‘macro themes’ that give a strategic understanding, “tell[ing] us what the texts as a whole are about” (ibid).

The Musalaha cycle with its aim of reconciliation takes the participants on a journey into depths of mutual understanding and relationship that encompass the whole of life. The Global Themes exemplify this holistic approach to dialogue.

1. Spiritual/metaphysical aspects: The importance of faith and religion cannot be understated in providing a common purpose, enabling trust, honesty and depth of relationship to develop:

There is a rich tradition of religion as a force for good in this country and much that is currently being done by people of faith that we can build upon (Casey, 2016, p. 122).

The Musalaha cycle’s aim is to bring reconciliation between peoples of difference. The model was explored in the context of Christian-Muslim dialogue, with one group including Hindus, but is equally adaptable to intrafaith contexts, such as: Protestant – Catholic and Sunni-Shia. By exploring our religions, the levels of understanding, of trust and depth of relationship, grew in all three groups.

2. Societal/structural aspects: These address the way we organise ourselves as a Society and, what the place of different cultures and traditions is? Is the multicultural UK working and where are the stresses? Casey considers that,

despite ... growing diversity of our nation and the general sense that people from different backgrounds get on well ...community cohesion did not feel universally strong across the country (Casey, 2016, p. 19).

The Organising Themes of the Political and Barriers with their Basic Themes of the State and Institutions, Evil and the Outsider focused on the way the country is organised and the challenges faced by minority communities, are considered honestly and with integrity in the context of dialogue. The last 50

years, since the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrant Act of 1962, when migrant workers became settlers, have seen the ethnic make-up of the UK, along with other countries, change significantly. Many issues facing the nation can be explored in the setting of dialogue with its acceptance and openness, including the discomfort of the outsider and the crisis of the second-generation migrant. The advent of radical elements in British Islam has made many in the UK authorities ask searching questions. Strategies such as 'Prevent' are considered ineffective in stopping the radicalisation process (The Guardian, 29 September 2016). The three research groups, especially the Catalyst Group, discussed issues openly. Subsequently it came to light that a couple of the Muslim participants had been in serious danger of becoming radicalised, which was why their leaders had sent them to the Catalyst Group. While the government searches for strategies to combat radicalism, and to develop integration, this study shows that genuine interfaith dialogue can address some of these issues.

3. Psychological/emotional/social aspects: How do we understand and feel about ourselves? Where do we belong and how can we integrate successfully in this country? The Organising Themes of Identity, and Forgiveness and Reconciliation, with their basic themes of Who am I? Nationality, Belonging, History and Forgiveness, drew together the issues discussed that the coding revealed. A person's identity is such a fundamental psychological issue in understanding oneself, both as an individual and in the social context, in the depth at which it was considered and this gave authenticity to the process. All humans face identity crises at different stages of life. In this interfaith dialogue, universal identity issues were considered in an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding.

The social aspects of living together in the UK are an imperative. Combatting radicalisation and developing integration remain issues the government must face and engage with. As Chapter 1 shows, successive British governments have proposed different strategies. At times, these strategies have seemed

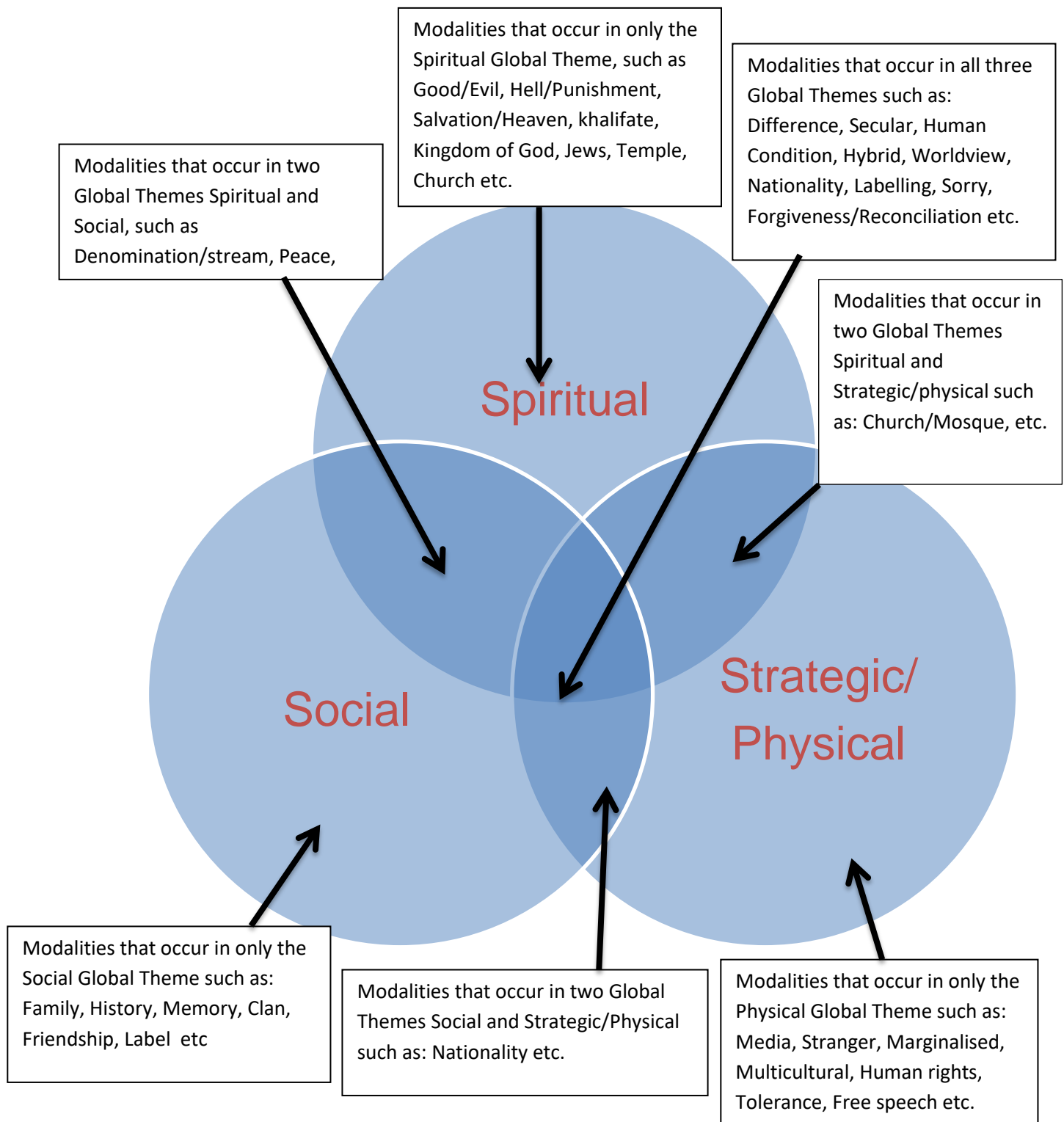
contradictory, with the 'Face to Face and Side by Side' report (2008), commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government, while the Prevent strategy is driven by the Home Office. The 'Face to Face and Side by Side' report affirmed the place of people of faith who "make a huge contribution to our society" (p.5). Its aims were to "explore how people in different communities ... are getting along" (p.8). It [the Commission on Integration and Cohesion] was "tasked with developing practical approaches to building communities' own capacity to build cohesion". Developing core principles of partnership, empowerment and choice, the report drew on the experience of over 185 responses from organisations and individuals. The report is filled with case studies of interfaith engagement, ranging from citywide initiatives, such as in Blackburn where the Local Authority and the Cathedral developed projects to break down barriers ('Meet your Neighbours') (p.59 &76) to small interfaith music and arts initiatives (Berakah project & Kalapremi)(p.38-9).

Since the 'Face to Face and Side by Side' report, the recession has curtailed most financial support for such interfaith projects, and also the change in government in 2010 has changed priorities. As chapter 1 explored, the priorities of the Coalition government (2010-2015), and the more recent Conservative government have taken responsibility away from local authorities. The Coalition government allocated funds to 'Near Neighbours' (Church Urban Fund) which is administered through the Church Urban Fund, to support and develop cohesion projects in England. As noted previously (chapter 3) the Catalyst Group was funded by Near Neighbours. There still remains, in my opinion, significant tension between cohesion and prevention. The Casey Review and recent comments by Ted Cantle highlight the need for the social aspects of integration to be addressed (chapter 1). It is the contention of this thesis that the model of interfaith dialogue explored in this thesis is an aid to the advancement of community cohesion. Many of the themes apply to more than one Global Theme. These Global Themes provide major topics addressed through interfaith dialogue, in the

struggle to live peaceful, fulfilled and satisfying lives in the United Kingdom and beyond.

The Global Themes and the emerging eight Dimensions

In this analysis, the eight dimensions are identified, indicating the depth of encounter which this model enables: (see appendix 7) Table 2



The intersection of the three circles/themes, at the centre of the diagram identifies eight dimensions: Difference, Secular, the Human Condition, Hybrid, Worldview, Nationality, Labelling and Forgiveness/Reconciliation. Although these eight have been identified, further analysis could uncover more. These dimensions provide distinctive and significantly important issues that the model implements (see appendices 6 and 7).

1. Difference is becoming more counter-cultural in western contexts, where immigration, the foreigner and nationalism are driving political decisions. The recent UK referendum, which decided in favour of leaving the European Union (EU), arguably had immigration as the issue of greatest concern to voters. Difference in terms of culture and ethnicity was emphasised, and for some, the sense of threat posed by that became the defining referendum issue. Notably, the most diverse populations, such as London and Manchester, voted to stay in the EU. Similarly, in the recent US election on an anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and, especially, anti-Mexican platform, Donald Trump clearly resonated with many, as he was voted into the White House. However, being a nation of immigrants, this position is most uncomfortable for many Americans, who are seeking to give a different message (Anti-Trump Army).

Theologically, the issue of difference was a key theme for the early church. The Acts of the Apostles records the church as a thoroughly multi-cultural community that wrestled with the issues raised by the Christian gospel extending out of its Jewish roots. From its very inception, the church at Pentecost demonstrates a model of being multi-national and multi-cultural:

Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene: visitors from Rome both Jews and converts to Judaism; Cretans and Arabs – we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues (Acts 2:9-11).

While the early followers had Judaism in common, their cultures and languages extended across the Eastern Mediterranean, the Levant and beyond. The definitive council that resolved the issue that the Christian message was for all cultures and ethnicities occurred in Jerusalem around 50CE, in response to the Christian message increasingly being accepted by non-Jews (Acts 15:1-36). The church asked the question, 'Do people from a non-Jewish background need to become Jews when they accept Jesus Christ, and come into the church?' As recorded in Acts 15, the answer to this question was a resounding 'No'. From that moment, diversity and difference was accepted as an essential aspect of the Christian Church. The Apostle Paul summarised this when he said about the church, "Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all" (Colossians 3:11).

The UK Church is increasingly becoming more multi-cultural. I served in a local church (1993-2012) that comprised 26 different nationalities and I conducted services in English, Urdu and Arabic. While not without its tensions, this reflects aspects of the acceptance of difference displayed by the early church. For Christians involved in the Musalaha model of interfaith dialogue, the acceptance of difference was an important factor. Indeed, in some of the groups it developed into 'celebration' of difference.

2. Secularism: The increasing secularity of western society was a constant and recurring theme in all groups, felt acutely by those who had recently come to the UK from distinctly religious societies, such as the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, who often wanted to celebrate the UK as a 'Christian' country, and were profoundly disturbed by the marginalisation of religion. Secularism was recognised as providing opportunity as well as challenge. For those participants born in the UK or resident here for many years, the advantages of a secular society were recognised; people are free to practise their faith without restriction, which some participants noted was not always the case for many non-Muslims in Islamic countries.

Religion has not disappeared and its resurgence (Graham, 2013) in much of the world, and in the UK, means that the struggle between secularism/atheism and religion/faith will continue. For our participants, the symbiotic relationship between formal and personal devotion/faith was an issue, although, as noted earlier, faith provided the 'common purpose' for this dialogue model.

3. The Human Condition: There were clear differences between religions over the nature of humanity, with Muslims affirming that each person starts from a neutral place and then responds to good or evil influences put upon them; "We believe everyone is born perfect. We believe in sin but we have to avoid sinning.....everyone is responsible for their own actions" (Muslim – CGW – session 2). Hindus affirmed something similar, commenting on the statement made by the Muslim participant that: "...that mentality is quite similar to Hindu mentality actually. The idea that people are responsible for their own actions" (Hindu – CGW- session 2). However, the Christians affirmed 'original sin' as the state into which each person is born; "we believe in original sin...that's what makes us different... it's a distinctly Christian belief" (Christian - CGW – session 2). Nevertheless, there was an acknowledgment that the world and its people faced severe challenges in many places, and that aspects of religion have been factors in causing these situations.

The fundamental issue of theological difference between the faiths in understanding the human condition was how to deal with evil/sin. The distinctive position held by Christians was that because of the condition of 'original sin', humanity was unable to change/rescue itself and hence needed a 'saviour'. The other faiths maintained that the example of their 'prophet' or their teaching provided them with the model and way of life, which, if correctly followed, would change/rescue the believer. There was much honest discussion on this subject, with participants agreeing to disagree, and remain friends. This model of dialogue enables a depth of engagement where fundamental disagreements over deeply-held views can be considered without endangering the relationships between participants.

4. Hybrid: the hybrid nature of UK society was raised by each of the groups. For some participants, born in the UK to Asian heritage families, the awareness of living in two worlds, with different cultures and values, was felt acutely. The sense of living in a 'mongrel' society can produce two different reactions: for some a sense of excitement at the creation of something new and fresh; for others, the fear of the unknown, as exemplified by the xenophobia demonstrated in recent votes. For others, notably in the Turkish Dialogue Group, there was a sense of transition. Although having dual nationality legally, many still felt themselves to be members of the nation of Turkey.

This sense of living in two worlds, while not quite at home in either, has resonance with the Christian theology of the kingdom of God – the 'now but not yet' of the kingdom – 'inaugurated eschatology'. In 1 Peter 2:11 the writer describes his readers as 'foreigners and exiles', emphasising that the kingdom has come with Jesus' birth, death and resurrection, who inaugurated a new kingdom (Mark 1:15 NIV) but which will not be fully realised until Jesus' Parousia (second coming). Hence, there is a sense that Christians are aliens awaiting the fulfilment of the kingdom, not belonging to this world. Christians live a hybrid life – on earth as part of the society into which they are born, but not entirely 'at home', while waiting for the fulfilment of the kingdom.

Hybridity is a way of life for migrant settlers, who feel that they belong to two or more cultures/societies, yet not at home in any. The shared sense of the hybrid nature of the participants' identities was picked up in the fifth dimension, nationality, which yielded many responses.

5. Nationality was an important issue for all participants, but was more acutely felt by those from a migrant heritage. Despite acknowledged hybridity, there was a strong loyalty to the heritage nation, even though it may never have been visited. For some, it was a painful experience, with reluctance to consider the darker episodes in a nation's history. Those of British heritage often found some issues hard to live with, such as the Slave Trade,

colonialism, or the crusades. Nevertheless, all three groups provided a place where critique of a person's heritage would be discussed honestly, even though this was uncomfortable for some.

The issue of nationality raises theological issues for both Christians and Muslims, though in different ways. For the Christian, the belief of the Apostle Paul, who grew up in a hybrid society as a Hellenistic Jew, is that "our citizenship is in heaven ... We eagerly await a Saviour from there" (Philippians 3:20). This reinforces the belief that the kingdom of God to which Christians belong is in heaven, where first allegiance should be given. For Muslims, the view of the kingdom/khalifate is less 'other worldly', as some Muslims consider Islamic teaching found in the Qur'an and hadith gives principles for an earthly kingdom ruled by Allah. There were discussions concerning how Sharia law should be implemented in non-Islamic countries.

These and similar issues will remain a rich source for future discussions. However, it was in groups where strong relationships had been formed that some of these difficult questions could be faced with integrity.

6. Worldview: Charles Kraft describes worldview as, "the central systemization of conceptions of reality to which the members of the culture assent (largely unconsciously) and from which stems their value system" (Kraft, 1979, p. 53).

Different worldviews are a major factor underlying misunderstandings between peoples of different cultures, exhibited in the identity crisis expressed by many of the participants. In Huntington's understanding presented in *the Clash of Civilizations* (Huntingdon, 1996), it could be a more significant issue than religion. Briefly, there are three broad worldviews: 'guilt/innocence', which predominates in the West and tends to a legalism that judges life as right or wrong; 'light/darkness' or 'good/evil', a fear-based worldview which is seen especially in Africa, India and animistically-dominant societies which emphasise the supernatural, evil spirits/jinn that affect everyday life; and

thirdly, 'shame/honour', that puts loyalty to one's clan or family before all else, predominating in the East and easily mistaken as an exclusively 'Muslim' worldview, when peoples of many faiths, including Christians in the Middle East, South Asia and beyond, see the world through 'shame/honour' eyes (Muller, 2010; Mischke, 2015; Georges & Baker, 2016). Some have argued that it was the shame/honour worldview that predominated in first century Israel providing the ethos in which Jesus and the New Testament writers lived (Muller, 2010).

While this is too simple an explanation, and in all cultures all three worldviews are in operation to varying degrees, some predominate in certain areas. In the West, as secularism becomes stronger, it is noticeable that more fear-based beliefs are reappearing, with New Age practices, lucky charms and an underlying attitude that says 'it was not meant to be', with fatalism often being assumed.

The New Testament exhibits all three worldviews: the innocent/guilty (right/wrong) worldview starts from the premise of guilt: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3.23). The Apostle Paul's doctrine of justification by faith envisages the law courts where a person is declared guilty (of sin) but pardoned because of the substitutionary atonement of Jesus on the cross. The shame/honour (purity) worldview can be seen in such verses as: "Let us run with perseverance the race set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame" (Hebrews 12:1-2). The good/evil worldview may be seen in the symbolic washing away of impurity, which then provides access to God, such as "... be baptised and wash your sins away" (Acts 22:16) and apocalyptic pictures such as "they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14).

The subject of 'worldview' has become an important topic in mission studies in recent years, and more consideration of it could be a fruitful area for future studies.

7. Labelling encompasses several associated issues, such as discrimination, essentialism, Islamophobia and prejudice. In our multicultural communities, as identified in Chapter 1, the perception that different communities have of each other is important for the development of cohesion.

All the groups expressed frustration at the ways the media sometimes portrayed them. They were especially critical of the BBC which has tended to describe terrorist acts as ‘Muslim terrorism’, which seemed to overlook the majority of Muslims, especially in the UK, who vehemently reject violence of any kind. The strong sense that they were being ‘tarred with the same brush’ produced frustration and anger. Frustration was expressed that liberal, open-minded Muslim views were ignored by the media, or, at best, under-reported. Recent events in the USA have increased a sense of labelling, where President Trump seems determined to exclude nationals from eight predominantly Muslim countries, although, as I write, the matter is still in the courts, awaiting final judgment.

Irrational fear of Islam (Islamophobia) continues to be a significant hindrance to the development of community cohesion. As I write this, a fire at a Mosque in the Newton Heath district of Manchester, started deliberately, is merely the most recent of a series of incidents described as ‘hate crimes’ and provides an example of the pressure faced by many in the Muslim communities (Charlotte Cox, 18 July 2017). For religious people, both Christian and Muslim, the call is to build friendships with people of other or no religion, with the twin aims of living in harmony and winning them for their religion. For Muslims, the Qur’an gives encouragement to developing positive friendships. As Chapter 2 made clear, several verses provide incentives to seek cohesion between peoples, for example, Q.2:62, 5:69, 22:17 and especially Q. 49:13 (al-Hujurat): “People, we have created you all from a single man and single woman, and made you into nations and tribes so that you should get to know each other”. Christians are called to ‘love their neighbours’ (Luke 10.27), but Jesus’ teaching goes further: “I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:43-44). The strong encouragement to seek the best for your neighbour is

demonstrated by the young church in its care of widows (Acts 6:1) and orphans (James 1:27) and the building of good relations with those outside the church (Colossians 4:5, 1 Thessalonians 4:12 and 1 Timothy 3:7).

The combatting of labelling and its associated practices must become a priority for the development of community cohesion, and models such as Musalaha provide the kind of relationships between people of genuine and deep devotion to their religion that enable individuals and groups to express their frustration and present a common stand against such practices that undermine confidence and give prejudiced and inaccurate images.

8. Reconciliation: Lastly, and significantly, the end and purpose for this model of dialogue is reconciliation. While reconciliation will involve forgiveness and apology, it is not a permanently attained state, but rather an on-going relationship, which is often fragile and needs to be constantly renewed. Munayer recognises the Musalaha model's indebtedness to Brian Cox's *Faith Based Reconciliation* (2011), which uses the example of Abraham: Pluralism (seeking unity in diversity); Inclusion (seeking to overcome hostility through love); Peacemaking (seeking peaceful outcomes to conflicts); Social Justice (seeking the common good); Forgiveness (seeking to repent and be reconciled); Healing collective wounds (through mutual recognition of each other's suffering); Sovereignty (seeking common ground through shared beliefs); and Atonement (seeking to emphasise that reconciliation's ultimate goal is finding peace with God) (p.10).

Reconciliation determines relationships between individuals and communities, but ultimately it is the relationship of peace with the Almighty that drives religious people. For Muslims, the Qur'an encourages peace as the goal; "because of their patient constancy: therein shall they be met with salutations and peace", (Q.27:75 Yusuf Ali translation), or "For them is the abode of *peace* with their Lord" (Q.6:127 Pickthall translation). For the Christian, in some passages, for example, "Since we have been justified through faith, we have

peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1), provide an assurance of peace with the Almighty.

The following chapter considers the autoethnographic nature of this research, considering the place of the researcher and the journey that he has taken over the last five years or more.

Chapter 6 Autoethnography and the Personal Journey

The Personal Journey

Ethnography involves immersing oneself in the peoples and relationships that are the subject of the research. Gilbert notes that “balancing detailed documentation of events with insight into their meaning to those involved is an enduring hallmark of ethnography” (Gilbert, 2008, p. 267). Garance Marechal considers that “autoethnography is a form or method of research that involves self-observation and reflexive investigation in the context of ethnographic field work and writing” (Marechal, 2010, p.43). Autoethnography puts the researcher as the centre of ‘focus and inquiry’, asking questions concerning how the research has affected the researcher and considering the ‘journey’ that the researcher has been through (Fetterman, 2010, p. 131). It is “research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political” (Ellis, 2004, p. xix). However Ellingson and Ellis admit that “the meanings and applications of autoethnography have evolved in a manner that makes precise definition difficult...” (Ellingson & Ellis, 2008, p. 449).

Ellis identifies a distinction between ethnography and autoethnography as social research methods, in that autoethnography acknowledges and embraces the researcher’s subjectivity, which empirical research will attempt to limit, considering that “ethnography is part auto or self and part ethno or culture...” and “something different from both of them, greater than its parts” (Ellis, 2004, p. 31 & 32). Ellingson and Ellis note, “whether we call a work autoethnography or ethnography depends as much on the claims made by the authors as anything else” (Ellingson & Ellis, 2008, p. 449).

Fetterman (2010) notes some of the criticisms of the ethnographic approach that “consider it postmodern excess and narcissism”; however, he also affirms it “as a tool to connect the personal story with the cultural issues that surround

them” (p. 131). He comments that autoethnography also often “aims to provoke thought and reconsideration about the status quo” (p. 131). Some traditional social scientists emphasise the objectivity of social research, and consider qualitative researchers, including autoethnographers, to be ‘journalists or soft scientists’, and their research to be “unscientific, or only exploratory, or entirely personal and full of bias” (Denzin, 2000, p. 256-260). Marechal maintains that early criticism of autobiographical methods concerned “their validity on grounds of being unrepresentative and lacking objectivity”, and that some consider autoethnographical methods to be irrelevant, due to ‘being too personal’. The criticism is that they are “biased, naval-gazing, self-absorbed or emotionally incontinent, and for hijacking traditional ethnographic purposes and scholarly contribution” (Marechal, Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2010, p. 43-45).

However, Adams, Jones and Ellis consider autoethnography to be a

research method that: uses a researcher’s personal experience to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices and experiences.

Acknowledges and values a researcher’s relationships with others...

Shows ‘people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2015, p. 4).

In this research, the part played by the researcher has been crucial, therefore reflexively considering the journey undertaken by myself, as the researcher, is important, both as a subject of research but also as a model for others undertaking the ‘interfaith adventure’. While everyone’s experiences will be unique to themselves, there will be patterns and common elements to the questions asked and processes of answering them. Laurel Richardson suggests five factors that can be used to evaluate personal narrative: 1) Substantive contribution – does the piece contribute to our understanding of social life? 2) Aesthetic merit – is the piece artistically shaped, satisfyingly complex and not boring? 3) Reflexivity – how has the author’s subjectivity been both a producer and a product of this text? 4) Impact – does it generate

new questions or move me to action? 5) Expresses a reality – does this text embody a fleshed-out sense of lived experience? (Richardson, 2000, p. 15-16).

Autoethnographic research inevitably raises ethical issues. Pat Sikes maintains that

for those who use autoethnographic approaches, ethical issues and questions around truth and truths are often more obvious and challenging than they are for those using other strategies. This is because telling our own stories usually implicates other people... (Sikes, 2015, p. 1).

Therefore, issues of confidentiality, anonymity and integrity are to be strongly considered, for not only is the researcher's journey on public display but others are also implicated in the stories. This research has kept all participants as anonymous as possible, with names changed where required. Sikes notes that "even if pseudonyms or fictional alterations and disguising strategies are employed", even then everyone who "appears in the narrative is potentially, if not explicitly, identified" (Sikes, 2015, p. 1).

Sikes gives a list of 15 guidelines when considering the ethical implications of autoethnographical research (Sikes, 2015, p. 2). The list below is a sample of the guidelines, which are particularly relevant to this research:

- Protect the people whose lives are the focus of the research.
- Be alert to the potential misuse of interpretational and authoritarian power.
- Respect participants' autonomy and the voluntary nature of participation and document the informed consent processes that are foundational to qualitative inquiry.
- Practise 'process consent' checking at every stage to make sure that participants still want to be part of the project. (See Appendices 3, 4, 5).
- Consult with others, such as your institutional ethics committee.

- Do not publish anything you would not show the persons mentioned (anonymously) in the text.
- Assume that all people mentioned in the text will read it one day. (Sikes, 2015, p. 2).

While the ethical provision seeks to minimise risk to participants, there are risks to the researcher, who cannot have anonymity and in autoethnographic research is vulnerable, as their personal history, beliefs, and emotional and psychological challenges are displayed. The changes that the process has produced are presented as part of the research, putting the researcher in a vulnerable position. To a certain degree, this must be accepted by the researcher, while seeking to limit the levels of disclosure to what is personally acceptable. However, the value of this exercise is profound, for it provides a model for others who wish to engage with those of other faiths, and awareness that this will involve engagement with difficult and challenging questions. This research seeks to give a new model of engagement, which will enable participants to develop a depth of relationship that enables genuine reconciliation. It is therefore important that the researcher has engaged with this process and is able to articulate the changes that have been a part of this process.

In the course of this study many of the presuppositions with which the research commenced have been questioned and assumptions challenged. Some changes have taken place both in relationships and in theological understanding, while others have been reinforced and deepened. This chapter continues with a brief history of my background and interfaith engagement, before considering questions of different approaches to interaction with other faiths, and why a particular path was followed. Then some of the significant and challenging questions raised by such interaction will be considered, before finally exploring the place that the researcher finds himself in at the present time.

A brief history of personal interfaith interaction

I have served as an Anglican priest for over 30 years in the Diocese of Manchester, recently in Old Trafford, Manchester (1993-2012) before taking up the role of Interfaith Officer in Oldham (2012-2016). During the time in Old Trafford, I studied for a M.A. in Islamic Studies at the University of Manchester, and subsequently taught at the Nazarene Theological College and All Saints Ordination Training Course.

My theological background

Following a dramatic encounter with God in 1970, at the age of 17, my development in the Christian faith had three major influences: the Evangelical movement, Charismatic Renewal and the 'Evangelism and Social Action' movement.

With this theological background engagement with peoples of other faiths has been both inspiring and challenging, as reflected in this thesis, in particular, asking questions at different stages of the 'journey'. Reflecting on this journey in the light of the Musalaha six-stage cycle has given me a 'road-map' which I critically deploy in order to understand my own responses, to map out the direction already travelled, and as a plan into the future.

i) Stage 1 - Beginning Relationships

Entering into dialogue inevitably provokes a number of significant questions. There will be conflict - how will I handle this? Conflict "can provide the opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ and give witness to the gospel, even to people who are attacking us" (Sande, 2004, p. 143). However, the biblical imperative is to seek to resolve conflicts:

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift (Matthew 5:23-24).

One of the first questions asked when entering dialogue is, 'Where does dialogue lead?' Chapter 7 will provide my definition of what is dialogue, but leaves open the personal question of 'Why should I engage in dialogue?' Is dialogue seeking only personal reconciliation between people or with the Almighty (God/Allah), or both? Is there salvation outside of Christianity?

Traditionally, there have been three groups of approaches held by Christians concerning other faiths, first established by Alan Race (1983), although more recently contested. While the boundaries between the three are often imprecise, nevertheless I still consider them to be useful in giving a broad understanding of the different positions held by those involved in dialogue. The Pluralist, Inclusivist and Exclusivist positions will be considered through the lens of a model developed by Martin Accad (Accad, 2011).

In this section, each of the different approaches will be explored, indicating many of the issues faced by the researcher, and my own position taken after much soul-searching. It is, therefore, at this point that ethnography and theology come together in ways that are unique to those researching deeper models of dialogue. In this way I also seek to explore the issue of positionality in research - as a professional Christian minister seeking to engage with honest and authentic integrity.

Approaches to Interfaith Dialogue

In a chapter in *Towards Respectful Understanding & Witness among Muslims*, Accad (2011) gives five different approaches: syncretistic, existential, kerygmatic, apologetic and polemical. Accad reflects on what he considers to be an atmosphere of fear concerning interfaith dialogue, between two extremes, where conservatives consider dialogue to be compromise, leading inevitably to syncretism, while liberals "fear that it will be used as a vehicle for polemics" (Accad, 2011, p.29). He considers the five approaches as providing a 'spectrum' of potential attitudes and positions.

The Syncretistic (Pluralist) position:

Religious pluralism considers that two or more religious worldviews are equally valid. John Hick cites from the Hindu Bhagavad Gita: "Let me then end with a quotation from one of the great revelatory scriptures of the world: 'However man may approach me, even so do I accept them; for, on all sides, whatever path they may choose is mine'" (Hick & Hebblethwaite, 1980, p.190).

Syncretism is much more than mere tolerance; it positively promotes that all religions (or at least two) are paths to God or the 'Real' (Hick, 2005) to include Buddhists who do not believe in a god. All religions are equal, and no particularities are considered. Syncretists "can endorse a theocentric theology of religions, based on a theocentric, non-normative reinterpretation of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ" (Knitter, 1995, p. 143) while John Hick considers a shift from a Jesus-centred model to a God-centred model a 'Copernican revolution', that:

involves a shift from dogma that Christianity is at the center to the realization that it is God who is at the center, and that all the religions of mankind, including our own, serve and revolve around him (Hick, 1973, p.131).

Hedges and Race maintain that a Christian pluralist can refer to biblical passages such as Amos 9:7 or Matthew 8:11 or 1 John 4:7. The inference is that anyone who loves is "born of God and knows God", irrespective of what faith they follow. Love has become the measure by which people encounter the 'the Real'.

D'Costa identifies different developments of pluralism, considering Hick's as 'unitary pluralism' because his aim is 'to articulate an essential unity between all the world's religions, in which all share common ideals and beliefs' (Morris, 2014, p.89). As well as 'unitary pluralism' D'Costa identifies 'ethical pluralism', where "all religions are related to the divine inasmuch as they contain certain ethical codes and practices....and should be judged according to the[ir] conceptual pictures of divine reality" (D'Costa, 2009, p.6).

John Sanders identifies three main critiques of syncretism. First, it is noted that no other religion has a true parallel to the Christian doctrine of the incarnation – Christianity is unique in its understanding of God’s revelation of himself in Jesus Christ.

Second, he notes that Hick and Knitter assert that “God will save all people” and that all religions are ways of salvation (Sanders, 1992, p.120). However, they are trading on a Christian understanding of both God and salvation, for if they are including eastern religions then their understanding of God must include a non-personal God who can do nothing, as well as a non-individualistic existence after death. Sanders, maintains that the move beyond theocentrism is beset with problems – What is meant by ‘liberation’, the goal of religion?

Third, Sanders considers that both Hick and Knitter are unable to avoid relativism, despite claims to the contrary. Knitter proposes a new model of truth, “asserting that our ultimate criterion for determining the truth of a proposition should be a determination of whether it helps us to accept and relate to others” (Sanders, 1992, p.122). But why should this criterion for truth be accepted? Knitter suggests that “we should accept it because it will help us accept and relate to others” (Sanders, 1992, p.122). This is a circular argument. Sanders concludes that “the new model of truth, is ... quite unaccepting of the entire Western tradition’ and finally poses the question, ‘Is this not exclusivism in pluralistic clothing?’ (Sanders, 1992, p. 123).

Existential (Inclusivist) position

Inclusivism is a position where all can attain salvation but unlike pluralism it remains Christian in affirming the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the atonement through his death and resurrection, and applies these universally. While pluralism opens salvation to all faiths and none, inclusivism confines salvation to the Christian God, who revealed himself in Christ, but opens that salvation to all: “Christian inclusivism seeks to make sense of vital features of the Christian faith: (1) the commitment to Christ as the unique and normative

revelation of God, and (2) God's universal salvific will" (Race and Hedges (2008), p. 63). This view is probably the mainstream view among the majority of Christians, following the statements of the Second Vatican Council in the mid-60s (Vatican, 1967), which declared:

If in the course of the centuries there has arisen not infrequent dissension and hostility between Christian and Muslim, this sacred Council now urges everyone to forget the past, to make sincere efforts at mutual understanding and to work together in protecting and promoting for the benefit of all men, social justice, good morals as well as peace and freedom (Hick & Hebblethwaite, 1980, p.35).

The Jesuit theologian, Karl Rahner, is considered the architect of the Second Vatican Council statement (Dowley, 1977, p.608). Rahner developed his theory of 'anonymous Christians', where people who have never heard the Christian Gospel might be saved through Christ. He maintains that:

...there is also an 'anonymous Christianity' as is expressed in the Second Vatican Council, there can be no doubt that someone who has no concrete, historical contact with the explicit preaching of Christianity can nevertheless be a justified person who lives in the grace of God (Rahner, 1978, p.176).

Also, a growing number of evangelicals such as John Sanders (Sanders, 1994), Clark Pinnock (Pinnock, 1992), Gerald McDermott (McDermott, 2000), Brian McLaren (2012) and Amos Yong (Yong, 2003), have all expressed some form of inclusivism (Race and Hedges (2008), p. 63).

Yong presents a case for a theology of 'hospitality' that underpins all interfaith engagement. Arguing that Jesus both received hospitality from the world he entered and gave hospitality to all he encountered, he points to the gracious acts of the God of hospitality through grace, seen in the incarnation, atonement and the giving of the Holy Spirit. Hence, he maintains that hospitality must be the basis of Christian witness, to the 'other', the stranger,

the faithless, indeed to all. Coming from a Pentecostal background, he develops a “pneumatological theology of interreligious praxis”, (Yong, 2012, p.99) adapting the ‘many tongues’ of Pentecost as a call for many forms of hospitality and evangelism.

Likewise, McLaren is concerned to emphasise the openness of Jesus to others, especially the marginalised and outsider, asking how Jesus would react to other faith leaders? Indeed turning to Jesus’ response to the Syro-Phoenician woman, a foreigner (Mark 7:24), and Zacchaeus, a social outcast (Luke 19:1-10), McLaren asks if Jesus would turn anyone away. Neither should the church, he argues.

Both Amos Yong and Brian McLaren developed their praxis-based theology of other faiths in the US post-9/11 context, where too often opinions have polarised. The election of Donald Trump on an anti-Islam ticket (Trump and Islam, May 2017) where he singles out Muslims from certain countries for exclusion from entry to the US (Trump Immigration ban, 28 January 2017) has merely deepened the polarisation. Hence, the gracious responses of people like Yong and McLaren may not be popular but present Christianity as a religion of welcome and acceptance.

Considering inclusivism from an evangelical perspective, Sanders (Sanders, 1994) is concerned with what happens to children who die either at birth or at a young age, as well as those who have never had the opportunity to hear the message of the gospel. With reference to the centrality of the Bible as a revealed expression of God’s intent for humankind, he highlights passages that reflect God’s desire for all people to know him and to come to salvation, such as, “This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (2 Peter 3:9). It is also noted that in the gospels Jesus frequently commends the non-Jew; for example, the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37); the ‘great faith’ of the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:28); the one returning healed leper, who was a Samaritan (Luke 17:11-19); while he reminds his hearers of Naaman the

Syrian, who was healed of his leprosy, and the widow of Zaraheth, in whose home the prophet Elijah sought sanctuary. As Cheetham says, "If anything is revealed by Jesus' earthly ministry it is his strong dislike for a form of religious correctness that draws a legalistic line around God's sovereign right to communicate with whoever he chooses." (Race & Hedges, 2008, p. 65).

Exclusivist positions

Daniel Strange highlights a working definition for exclusivism when quoting Harold Netland (Netland, 2001, p. 48):

1. The Bible is God's distinctive written revelation; it is true and fully authoritative; and this is where the claims of Scripture are incompatible with those of other faiths; the latter are to be rejected.
2. Jesus Christ is the unique incarnation of God, fully God and fully man, and only through the person and work of Jesus is there the possibility of salvation.
3. God's saving grace is not mediated through the teachings, practices or institutions of other faiths (Strange, 2008, p. 37).

D'Costa divides exclusivist positions into two strands: 'universal-access exclusivism' and 'restrictive-access exclusivism' (D'Costa, 2009, p. 25-32). Universal-access exclusivism, with which D'Costa identifies himself, makes 'salvation universally accessible' but not necessarily 'universally realized' (D'Costa, 2009, p. 26-27). He is clear that hearing the gospel and thereby having the opportunity to respond, which is necessary for salvation, may happen in this life or in a life to come. Everyone, they maintain, will have an opportunity to accept or reject the gospel message.

Restrictive-access exclusivism is D'Costa's label for the Calvinist tradition of 'double predestination', where salvation is only for the 'elect' and the rest are damned (D'Costa, 2009, p. 29). The emphasis is on human sinfulness and God's graciousness in saving even the elect. While this position raises many questions concerning the nature of God, other exclusivists may not take such

a stark, seemingly cold view of God's desire for all to be saved (2 Peter 3:9). Geivatt and Phillips describe themselves as 'particularists', defining their exclusivist position as: "except perhaps in very special circumstances, people are not saved apart from explicit faith in Jesus Christ, which presupposes that they have heard about the salvific work on their behalf" (Geivatt & Phillips, p. 214). Clearly this raises questions concerning those who have not heard or are unable to hear the gospel message.

Strange concentrates on what he calls 'Reformed Evangelical Pre-suppositional Exclusivism' (REPE) (Strange, 2008, p. 45). He maintains that there can be no neutral confession-less stance regarding other religions, with the Christian scriptures as the ultimate authority: for example, "One cannot serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24) or "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name (Jesus) under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Accad separates exclusivism into three different positions: apologetic, polemic and kerygmatic (Accad, 2011, p. 32). Exclusivism has been the historical position of the church. However, in present liberal western culture, it appears to many to be out-dated, intolerant and a 'relic of history'. It remains a significant influence upon many evangelicals and a position in one form or another held by most.

Polemical Approach

The Polemical approach stands at the opposite end from pluralism, promoting a triumphalist view of Christianity, strongly holding that all other faiths are simply wrong, or even false, including Islam. Any dialogue would have the purpose of demonstrating this, and often results in aggression, although proponents justify it with claims that many Muslims are coming to the Christian faith. Proponents such as the Coptic Priest, Father Zacharia Boutros, Jay Smith and convert from Islam, Nabeel Qureshi give "a voice to their repressed frustration that resulted... from numerous experiences of oppression and

persecution by their families, community and governments” (Accad, 2011, p.34), but this approach will prevent many other avenues of engagement.

Apologetic Approach

The Apologetic approach takes its example from the New Testament apostles, Peter and Paul. Peter exhorts the young church to “always be prepared to give an answer (*apologia*) to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect ...” (I Peter 3:15).

Accad sees the main problem with this approach is that it often leads nowhere, but only to ‘sterile arguments’ around the same issues of disagreement (Accad, 2011, p.36). This approach views Islam as a human phenomenon, where Muhammad was mistaken, and Muslims’ understanding of God is misleading. Christians with this view will engage with Muslims with the aim of evangelism, seeking to demonstrate the truth of Christianity and the error of Islam, in an attempt to see others convert: this is similar to the Muslims’ approach to *daw’a* (invitation).

Kerygmatic Approach

The Kerygmatic approach, from the *Kerygma* (‘proclamation’) in the New Testament, is “both the act of proclaiming and the proclamation itself” (Accad, 2011, p. 37), used by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1, Mark 1:4, Luke 3:3) and Jesus (Matt 4:23; 9:35, Mark 1:14,39; Luke 4:4; 8:1) and then later by the disciples (Acts 20:25, 28:31). This approach seeks neither to defend accusations aimed at Christianity, nor to find flaws in Islam, but rather to emphasise the positive message of the Christian faith.

My own position:

It is most important for anyone involved in interfaith work that they have clarity about what they believe and why they are engaging in dialogue. This draws together the ethnographic and theological strands in this research. Over my years of interfaith dialogue my own position has touched on all those

described above at various times. The personal wrestling with these issues has been for me a significantly formative process. The deeper the relationship, the harder it is to consider that your friend might not have the same relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, that you enjoy. While recognising that my own position could change, at present I describe my exclusivist position as one of 'hospitable particularity'. While strongly affirming the sovereignty of God and his desire that all should be saved (1 Timothy 2:4), I am conscious that relationships of love, at the heart of the divine encounter, are entered into freely, and that freewill is central to the love relationship. Hence people must be free either to accept or reject God's offer of supreme love expressed through the incarnation and atonement of Jesus Christ. Hell is affirmed strongly in Scripture (i.e. Matthew 5: 22, 29, 30; Mark 9: 43, 45, 49; Luke 12:5), and justice demands that there are consequences for rejecting God's love and living a life outside of his will. As to those who have not heard, cannot, or are unable to hear the gospel and thereby make a response to God's invitation in Christ, I do not know; and all attempts to provide an answer seem to me to fall short. I find D'Costa's universal-access exclusivism (D'Costa, 2009), with its post-mortem invitation, attractive but not compelling, and hence the questions remain for me; and to some extent I might be accused of taking the easy route and opting out, when I merely leave the question with the God who I believe is just, and prefer to concentrate on what I am more confident to affirm. I describe this position as 'hospitable' because this God of love welcomes everyone; the prodigal, the outsider, the poor and the rich, those on the margins; and his message is to be shared with all, "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

There are two main influences in reaching this position:

1. The Accad models of Christian-Muslim engagement as described above, which gives me clarity in the different approaches.
2. Tom Greggs in an article, *Legitimizing and necessitating inter-faith dialogue* (Greggs, 2010, pp. 194-211) "considers the grounds on which exclusivist

religious people can undertake inter-faith dialogue” (p. 196), asking two questions; “Why should religious people engage in inter-faith dialogue?” and “What does dialogue seek to achieve?” (p. 196). He is clear that dialogue does not necessarily undermine the need for particularity, affirming that:

it is incumbent on individual faith communities and traditions to engage in dialogue with others on the basis of their individual particularity. Put concretely, a Christian should engage with a Muslim on the basis of Christianity; a Muslim with a Christian on the basis of Islam (2010, p. 197).

This is a view that I thoroughly endorse and has underpinned the interfaith work I have engaged in over the past 20+ years. Indeed, I consider that approaching other faiths on the basis of particularity provides an integrity and openness which engenders honesty in relationship that can lead to considerable depth.

So what is the purpose of interfaith dialogue? Coming from a Conservative Evangelical tradition that affirms the necessity of conversion and new birth into the Christian faith, and maintains the need to share that message appropriately in the context that we find ourselves, I found that interfaith dialogue opened up many fresh questions. Since sensing a call to work amongst the poorest in society, I have considered that Jesus’ commandment, to “love your neighbour as yourself” (Mark 12:31) and his ‘Great Commission’ to “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19) to be two sides of one mission. That continues to be applied to interfaith engagement, holding cohesion and conversion together. However, as interfaith engagement has developed, a growing realisation has taken hold; that it leads to ‘changing ourselves not the other’. The hope to see all ‘in Christ’ remains; but the recognition is that in dialogue our responsibility is to enable the process to change ourselves; changes in others cannot be our responsibility but are God’s. The calling is to be faithful to our exclusivist understanding of Christianity. This leads to personal transformation but also to community

transformation, as the intrafaith aspects to dialogue become evident (Greggs, 2010, p. 204).

I have concentrated on stage 1 (Beginning Relationships) of the Musalaha six-stage cycle because it is at this stage that these important questions must be considered before dialogue is able to develop. These questions continued to be wrestled with throughout the process and beyond. Many Christians rest in comfortable complacency and arrogance, and are ghettoised, if not in their environment, then in their thinking. It is a safe place, albeit one that lacks integrity. However, the beginning of engagement requires a letting go of the artificial shell, with which we can surround ourselves, and a willingness to let people in who have very different worldviews and beliefs. This will sometimes mean facing severe challenges to the grace that Christians maintain is at the heart of their message. For example, the first seven sessions of the Priests-Imams group consisted in the Christian leaders being told that we were wrong, as our Muslim colleagues polemically, occasionally aggressively, dismissed Christian beliefs, and presented the alternative Islamic views. For some Christian leaders, this was hard to take, but all kept their thoughts to themselves.

During session 7, a particular incident (an epiphany moment) broke the deadlock, when the issue of conversion was raised – as described previously (p. 80-81). However, once this ‘elephant in the room’ had been named, the whole atmosphere changed. Genuine inquiry developed, as both groups started asking questions. In fact, I suspect that the Muslim leaders, once they had fulfilled their ‘da’wa’, began to ask more questions than the Christian leaders. For me, this was a significant moment, as I had asked whether this group could continue, when the Muslim leaders were so clearly intent on ‘da’wa’ and the Christian leaders were becoming increasingly frustrated. It almost spilled over in the fifth session, when a young man most forcibly attacked the authenticity of the Christian Scriptures. In the end, the older Muslim leaders silenced him and he was not seen again.

Upon reflection, this process of the Muslim colleagues feeling the need to do 'da'wa', to present their case, warning the Christians of the consequences of not turning to Islam, is a necessary obligation for them. The dialogue could not really begin until they had fulfilled that obligation. The Turkish Dialogue group had a similar experience, although theirs was not as pronounced or assertive, but nevertheless, they needed to tell the Christians that we are wrong.

Once the 'da'wa' obligation was complete then the dialogue began, which on the Musalaha cycle, moved the groups from stage 1 to stage 2.

Stage 2 - Opening Up

Opening up is a gradual process and the time scale was different with each group. Upon reflection, I consider that the Priests-Imams group is still in this stage after five years, and may remain there, although individuals will have moved beyond it. However, the Turkish Dialogue Group quickly moved into stage 3 (withdrawal) and about 18 months later, following a time of reflection when the group did not meet, moved onto stage 4. It is now progressing through the cycle. The Catalyst Group left some participants uncomfortable and fearful about continuing, having experienced stage 2. The group disbanded and some did not return for various reasons. However, for some of the participants the withdrawal stage had positive consequences as they made the transition and having faced the consequences, they were willing to proceed. Sadly, there were insufficient participants willing to proceed to make the group viable.

Reflecting upon the journey, stage 2 raised a number of questions, such as issues of my own integrity and honesty, which became important. Was there an unspoken agenda of conversion? How could a 'welcoming particularity', alongside the deepening of relationships, also hold on to the imperative to share the gospel?

How do Muslims regard Christians? Inevitably there are a variety of responses. The breadth of Christian views concerning other faiths has been

considered. Muslim views, however, at one extreme, consider all other faiths as infidels, interpreting Sura 9.29: “Fight against those who believe not in Allah nor the last day ... nor acknowledge the religion of truth (even if they are People of the Book), until ... feel themselves subdued” (Q.9.29 (Yusuf Ali Translation)).

Or Sura 9.5: “Fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war): but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practise regular charity, then open the way for them” (Q.9.5 (Yusuf Ali Translation)).

My experience has been that when these and similar verses are interpreted by some people in a literalist way, an aggressive attitude can develop, and dialogue is rejected. A number of personal encounters with Muslim leaders, especially from Salafi or Deobandi heritages, made it impossible to develop any meaningful dialogue because Christian, or indeed any other, views are deemed wrong, or ‘from the devil’.

However, especially in the West, a growing number of ‘liberal Muslims’ are reinterpreting these verses to encourage interfaith and cross-cultural engagement while emphasising verses such as Sura 109.6: “For you is your religion and for me is my religion” (Q.109.6 (Mohammad Marmaduke Pickthall translation)). Asma Afsaruddin considers that Sura. 29.46 establishes a “distinctive protocol of dialogue with Jews and Christians” (Afsaruddin, 2016, p. 175). The verse states:

Do not dispute with the People of the Book ... except for those who do wrong among them, and say (to them); We believe in that which was revealed to us and revealed to you, and our God and your God is one, and we submit to Him.

Alternatively, she points to Sura 3:64, which she maintains is “concerned primarily with Muslim relations with Jews and Christians” or People of the Book: “Say, O People of the Book, let us come to a common word between us

and you that we will not worship but the one God not ascribe any partner to Him” (Afsaruddin, 2016, p. 178).

Some commentators on this verse suggest that the ‘People of the Book’ mentioned was an exclusive reference to the three tribes of Jews in Medina, while others consider it referred specifically to the Christian delegation of sixty men of Najran who met with Muhammad in 631 CE. Afsaruffin notes that, “the Christians of Najran were received kindly by the Prophet and allowed to pray in the mosque at Medina over the protests of some” (2016, p. 178). Also, there was a discovery of a series of covenants reputed to be between Muhammad and the People of the Book, which Andrew Morrow claims to have rediscovered and translated. They purport to indicate that the Prophet of Islam stated that Muslims are not to attack peaceful Christian communities, but defend them until the ‘end of the World’ (Morrow, 2013). Muslims seeking to develop peaceful relationships with other faiths have been quick to publicise the recent discovery of these texts:

With Islam’s rising influence in Arabia by 626 A.D., Prophet Muhammad sent a series of letters to various kings and leaders ... declaring his intention for peace and cooperation. In 628 A.D., a delegation from St. Catherine’s Monastery came to Prophet Muhammad and requested his protection. He granted them protection and provided them with a letter which is called the ‘Charter of Privileges’ (Holy Prophet – the Covenant).

In 2007, a group of Muslim leaders launched ‘A Common Word between You and Us’ (The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2012), an open letter, signed by 138 leading Muslim scholars and intellectuals:

In essence, it proposed, based on verses from the Holy Qur’an and the Holy Bible, that Islam and Christianity share, at their cores, the twin ‘golden’ commandments of the paramount importance of loving God and loving one’s neighbor ... It called for peace and harmony between

Christians and Muslims worldwide (The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2012, p. 7).

This initiated a process that received positive but cautious responses from Christian leaders. For example, Professor David Ford, of the Cambridge Interfaith Programme, considered that the open letter *A Common Word Between Us and You* (2007) was “probably the single most important initiative ever taken by Muslim scholars and authorities towards Christians” (The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2012, p.8).

The publication of the letter by Muslim leaders initiated a series of conferences, seminars, workshops, training programs, university courses, etc. It inspired the publication of books, articles, dissertations and reports and the founding of the 3-yearly Catholic-Muslim Forum, which was first held at the Vatican in 2008, and then at the Baptism Site, Jordan, in 2011.

This open letter, *A Common Word Between Us and You* (2007), represents a significant thawing of formal relations between Christian and Muslim leaders, which has enabled considerable dialogue to take place. However, such initiatives have little effect upon the local communities which inhabit the urban centres of the UK and elsewhere, where fear and mistrust often prevail; and the *Open Letter* did receive significant criticism from both Muslims and Christians (Common Word).

Stage 3 – Withdrawal

This stage was encountered at a point when I was beginning to teach Christianity and Islam. During a session with a group of third-year curates, a group of them aggressively shouted out, ‘You just want to convert them!’ While this did not lead to a positive seminar, it did make me stop and ask the question, ‘Why am I engaging with Muslims?’

Stage 3 provides a time for personal reflection and for facing the challenges that interfaith engagement produces. At this stage, I pulled back from some

engagement, as it coincided with the Turkish Dialogue Group stopping, and their withdrawal. The other groups were at crucial stages and this provided both the space and the impetus to clarify the purpose of dialogue and my aims in this engagement. As noted earlier, I consider the gospel message as one of both evangelism and social action (Sider, 1993), which is described as two sides of 'mission', both of equal value and importance. Might conversion and cohesion be two sides of interfaith engagement, of equal value and importance?

Andrew Wingate, in his book *Why Interfaith?* (2016) emphasises the 'golden rule'; the command "to love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31) and points to Jesus as the example in dialogue:

Normally Jesus' mission encounters with dialogue are to people in need ... The greatest example is ... in John 4, Jesus' meeting with the 'untouchable' Samaritan woman; so also in John 3, with the encounter with Nicodemus – and so we go on (Wingates & Myrelid, 2016, p. 8).

While these encounters have an evangelistic element, they are essentially cross-cultural engagements that involve both listening and proclamation. Meeting people in their need has a spiritual, physical and social dimension. On many occasions, Jesus meets the presenting needs of those he encounters without there being any mission conditions: the ten lepers were healed, including at least one Samaritan; the 5,000 and 4,000 were hungry and he fed them; he healed both Jews and Gentiles. He met their need out of compassion. Wingate quotes Max Warren in describing the need to "go where the other is, their homes and places of worship, if we are really able to learn and to witness to Christ" (Wingate & Myrelid, 2016, p. 9).

Community cohesion, which works:

towards a society in which there is a common vision and sense of belonging by all *communities* ... in which the diversity of people's

backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued ... in which similar life opportunities are available to all (Cantle, 2007, p. 3).

is an outworking of the command to 'love our neighbour' (Matthew. 22:39).

Stage 3 provided an opportunity to rethink why I was engaging in dialogue and from these reflections I developed four aims (in arbitrary order):

1. To build relationships of genuine depth and integrity that will bring dialogical reconciliation and thereby aid integration and facilitate community cohesion
2. To understand the faith of my neighbour through listening and questions
3. To witness to my faith in Jesus Christ with clarity and conviction
4. To grow in understanding of my own faith through engagement with other faiths.

Following withdrawal, some of the participants re-emerged into dialogue. It was the Turkish Dialogue Group that facilitated growth into stage 4 of the Musalaha cycle.

Stage 4 – Reclaiming Identity

The Musalaha programme presents this stage as involving the reclaiming of identity, the different understanding of oneself in relation to the other person, where honesty and depth of relationship are central. My personal engagement with the leader of the Priests-Imams Group has developed into the depth of stage 4, to such a degree that a shared trip to Pakistan is being planned. It has involved considerable self-control and quashing of the desire to constantly share the Christian message, not losing it, but putting it aside and taking it up again, when appropriate contexts appear. This is a shared position, as my Muslim colleague will, on occasions, tell me how Christians are wrong. However, this is from a place of committed relationship and sometimes light humour. The level of mutual understanding and commitment is extraordinary

as common understandings are developed and the desire to grow deeper is explored.

Stage 4 of the cycle reclaims identity; but it also enables the remembering of history, of differences to be faced honestly. Alongside remembering, is the powerful tool of 'redemptive forgetting' (Volf, 1996, p. 135-136). How do we love someone who is different, who may have offended us? Miroslav Volf affirms that "love not in the sense of warm feeling but in the sense of benevolence, and the search for communion", is imperative for reconciliation, the aim of dialogue (Volf, 2007, p. 17). Munayer considers that remembering rightly is vital if the process of reconciliation is to develop: "Since memories shape present identities, neither I nor the other can be redeemed without the redemption of our remembered past" (Volf, 1996, p. 133).

Stages 5 - Committing and Returning

The Turkish Dialogue Group is the only one of the research groups to move into this stage as this thesis is being written. However, I am most conscious that stages 4, 5 and 6 are in the process of taking the researcher into new areas where he has not previously travelled. Therefore, the success of the journey through these stages will be dependent, to some degree, upon the skills of the researcher who is facilitating the group.

As already noted, Munayer envisions that this stage has three main issues (Munayer, 2011, p.236-248): discouragement, justice and reconciliation. The discouragement phase needs to be pushed through, with the help of the examples mentioned by Munayer and other role models. It is a stage that tests the determination and strength of the group, that I have experienced personally, as well as helped direct the Turkish Dialogue Group through.

Issues of justice are being thoroughly considered, with recent topics such as 'Religion of Peace' being discussed. The recent incidents in Manchester and London have raised questions concerning whether our religions promote peace or violent aggression. A comparison of different passages from

respective scriptures provided the content for a number of significant dialogical discussions. The group, as will be noted in the analysis of the themes, has tackled issues around reconciliation on a number of occasions, providing fruitful engagement.

The group is still in stage 5, but is beginning to ask questions relevant to stage 6.

Stage 6 - Taking Steps and beyond

Every stage has challenges and stage 6 asks the participants to deliberately put into practice what they have commonly shared through the dialogue cycle. Again, leadership of the group is important, not to travel too fast, while at the same time ensuring that the group remains focused and excited about where it may be leading.

At the present time there are two initiatives developing, which appropriately fit into this stage. First, a new dialogue group is being drawn together in a locality nearby. The Longsight Community Faith Association was initiated in 2016, and members of the Turkish Dialogue Group who live in the Longsight area have recently joined the group. The experience of Turkish Dialogue Group over the last few years is providing an incentive and model for this new group. It will be interesting to watch how this new group develops and see what influence the members of the Turkish Dialogue Group exert. Second, a trip is being planned during 2018 for members of the group to travel together to visit Bosnia, where both Christian and Muslim development projects will be visited. Hizmet continues to operate in Bosnia, running schools and social action/development schemes, crossing ethnic divides and developing interfaith dialogue. I am aware of similar projects within the Christian communities, and it is hoped that the group will both visit and participate in some of the activities. Also it is hoped that visits to Mostar and Srebrenica will be possible. At the time of completing this thesis the group is actively consider homelessness projects in Manchester that it might become involved with.

This chapter has reflected on my personal journey through the interfaith dialogue experience over the last 15 years. The journey continues, but reflecting on the themes and subjects of dialogue, it is clear that while faith provides a foundation for all involved, the groups have been concerned with questions of living together in harmony – the development of cohesion. Therefore, my theological position of ‘hospitable particularity’ provides the foundation upon which to base the strategic aim of ‘building cohesion while seeking conversion’.

Chapter 7 Interfaith Dialogue - a means to reconciliation between religious people

This thesis makes the case for a new and fresh approach to interfaith dialogue based on an emerging model, with the aim of developing reconciliation between people of devout faith in their respective religions. My definition of the term 'Reconciliation', arising from the research, is 'the restoration of relationship, after enmity, that enables both individuals and communities to live in peace and harmony with themselves and each other'. This model has been made possible by adapting the Musalaha six-stage cycle pioneered in the Israel/Palestine context, by Salim Munayer (2011), and indicating its theological and strategic relevance for the UK context. It strongly affirms that the participants' faith is the underlying common purpose, giving strength to the motivation needed to drive the process towards reconciliation. In relation to the data emerging from the research, I am using 'faith' to mean the personal and individual devotion to a person's religion that encapsulates the whole of the person's life. The relation between this definition of faith and religion is a complex and blurred one, but nevertheless is central to how this new model works. In other words, my use of the word faith is concentrating on the internal drivers of motivation that are held within the external religious framework, but which are not confined to that framework, in terms of creating deep relationships with people of different traditions.

This final chapter has three aims:

1. It will develop these definitions, extrapolating nuanced meanings, which aid an understanding of the process leading to reconciliation. It will provide theological foundations for the imperative to work towards reconciliation, considering both Christian and Muslim texts.

2. It will explore further the journey through which participants travel and the liminal experiences that lead to 'Communitas', as a shared place in which dialogue can be engaged in at depth.
3. It will explore further the application of this model for the UK context, asking what makes it distinct and different, how it has been adapted from its Middle Eastern context and its limitations and opportunities. It will consider the flow of the journey that participants travel, beginning with external factors, leading into an internal excursion, before re-emerging into an external encounter with the lived context, with new insights and understanding.

1. Definitions

For the purpose of this thesis the definition of 'Interfaith Dialogue' that has been developed means:

Encounter/s between people of deep and committed devotion (faith) to their religion, which enables engagement leading to relationships, that enrich both their own faith and that of each other, on a journey towards reconciliation.

This definition identifies four key concepts: Faith, Engagement, Relationships and Reconciliation, each of which will be explored in further depth emerging from the thematic coding in chapters 4 and 5. These 'dimensions' provide the foundational and theological pillars upon which this model stands.

The four existential dimensions of my model of dialogue

i) Faith:

Two of the major dimensions identified were faith and religion. The symbiotic relationship between the two means that at times it is difficult to distinguish between them. I am defining faith as 'a personal, individual devotion to one's respective religion'. In the analysis, it was possible to identify the two themes emerging, where religion provided the framework, sometimes institutional, within which deep, committed devotion/faith could be nurtured and expressed.

It was personal faith that provided the common purpose which drove the dialogue process forward. During the more challenging times, such as stage 3 (Withdrawal), it seemed that those with a stronger personal faith were the participants who decided to stay and continue through the cycle. Sadly, exit interviews were not formally carried out; only informal conversations took place and second-hand opinions offered.

It is my contention that the individual faith of the participants provided the strength to enable the dialogue groups to continue and thrive. I suspect that without the strength of personal faith the groups may well have neither reached the depths of engagement nor even continued beyond stage 1. Personal faith supplied the dimension that equipped the groups with perseverance and determination to proceed through the 'hard' stages, where difference, confrontation and challenge were experienced. Without the security of personal faith, it is unlikely that these stages would have been embraced or navigated.

From the Christian perspective, the incentives to engage at depth and to seek for reconciliation are three-fold: i) The Nature of God - God is Love (1 John 4:7-8); and hence when Christians demonstrate love they are showing connectivity to God. Munayer maintains that "Human life on earth is like a testing ground for our love; we have to practise our love on other people, and through this we show our love for God" (Munayer, 2011, p.31) (1 John 4:20-21). Jesus takes this command to love a step further: "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (Matthew 5:43-44). Munayer notes that "Taking this commandment seriously, it has clear very significant implications and clearly points in the direction of reconciliation" (Munayer, 2011, p.32). ii) The impact of sin – the consequence of sin creates a broken relationship between humans and God (Genesis 3:6), between males and females (Genesis 3:16), between humans and creation (Genesis 3:17-19), between brothers (Genesis 4: 8-10) and between ethnic groups (Genesis 11). iii) Grace is God's answer – despite human sin, God's love continues so that

blessing and promises are received (e.g. Noah – Genesis 9:13-16; the rainbow as a reminder of God's mercy and grace). Love culminates in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (1 John 4:9, Romans 5:8). Jesus' death on the cross was God's love being supremely demonstrated:

On the cross, God is manifest as the God who, though in no way indifferent towards the distinction between good and evil, nonetheless lets the sun shine on both the good and the evil [cf. Matt. 5:45]; as the God of indiscriminate love who died for the ungodly to bring them into the divine communion [cf. Rom. 5:8]; as the God who offers grace – not cheap grace, but grace nonetheless – to the vilest evildoer (Volf, 2001, p. 41).

As Munayer affirms, "The greatest expression of (God's) mercy and grace is seen in the image of the cross, where Jesus died for our sins, and made possible reconciliation between God and humanity, and reconciliation among humanity" (Munayer, 2011, p. 36) (2 Corinthians 5:17-19).

From the Muslim perspective, the incentives to engage are demonstrated in *A Common Word: Between Us and You* (2012).

Of God's Unity, God says in the Holy Qur'an: Say: He is God, the One! God, the Self-Sufficient Besought of all! (Al-Ikhlās, 112:1-2). Of the necessity of love for God, God says in the Holy Qur'an: So invoke the Name of thy Lord and devote thyself to Him with a complete devotion (Al-Muzzammil, 73:8). Of the necessity of love for the neighbour, the Prophet Muhammad said: 'None of you has faith until you love for your neighbour what you love for yourself' (p.20).

A Common Word, signed by 118 Muslim scholars in 2007, calls for dialogue and cooperation based upon 'these two principles – love of the One God and love of the neighbours' (p. 20).

The Muslim scholars maintained that the 'Two Great Commandments' are an area of common ground and a link between the Qur'an, the Torah and the

New Testament. The Qur'an provides considerable authority to those who seek for understanding and reconciliation between Muslims and Christians, with verses such as:

Say O People of Scripture! Come to a common word between us and you: that we shall worship none but God, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside God (al-Imran 3:64).

Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and contend with them in the fairest manner. Truly thy Lord is Best Aware of him who strayeth from His Way and He is Best Aware of those who go astray (Al-Nahl, 16:125).

The original letter (*A Common Word* – 2007) concluded with these words:

So let our differences not cause hatred and strife between us. Let us vie with each other only in righteousness and good works. Let us respect each other, be fair, just and kind to one another and live in sincere peace, harmony and mutual good will (p. 21).

In short, the aim of *A Common Word* is reconciliation of relationships between Christians and Muslims that enables mutual understanding and harmony. In this research, the personal faith of the individuals was crucial to enabling Christians and Muslims (and Hindus in the Catalyst Group) to engage in depth on a road to reconciliation.

Members of all three groups were invited and chosen because of their personal faith commitment, as leaders/members within religious communities. Therefore, there was reciprocity of conviction, where robust defence of one's own beliefs and honest challenging questioning of the others' faith could be undertaken. The process of working through these 'faith' issues was the most formative time in building a group that would go on to wrestle with other deep topics.

ii) Engagement:

As already expressed, one of the motivating influences in undertaking this research was a frustration with what appeared to be a superficial level of engagement in some of the models of interfaith dialogue. The model pioneered in this research provides a vehicle through which those who wish to can engage on a deep level, explore issues that define them as people and maintain and even grow their own religious and personal faith commitment.

The trajectory of the dialogue is from the superficial to depth of engagement. The model will not allow people not to engage at that deep level, while providing opportunities for those who feel too uncomfortable to withdraw from the group. Stage 3 provides such a decisive and significant juncture, where participants must stop and reflect on the challenges and opportunities of continuing with the dialogue. Some left, never to return; others came through the stage quickly, eager to face the challenges of the following stages, while still others returned slowly. There were epiphany moments where sudden flashes of understanding gave confidence to continue and personal insights were realised.

iii) Relationship

Relationships exist at many levels and the key to them are the links that facilitate them. The family kinship has a genetic/blood connection, while, alternatively, working for a common organisation provides a contractual relationship. These different relationships necessitate different degrees of intimate self-disclosure and may exist for varying time scales. The relationships developed during the dialogue sessions using this model pass through different levels; and different means of connectivity emerge at different times. From a relatively formal initial meeting in stage 1, with the inevitable 'feeling out' of each other where issues of da'wa and evangelism are confronted, through stage 2, where genuine issues of commonality and difference are considered, relationships change. For those who are only interested in seeing the other as those to do da'wa or evangelism with, where

the other is considered only as waiting to join our religion, stage 2 soon provides them with little space, and they withdraw. Because relationship lies at the heart of this model, those who wish only to have a superficial relationship find the group uncomfortable.

Theologically, it is my conviction that relationship lies at the heart of God. The Christian God is Love (1 John 4:16), which will always be expressed by giving out to another (1 Corinthians 13). Relationship exists in the Christian understanding of God as Trinity, and love provides the motivation for creation (Romans 1:20) and redemption (John 3:16). The motivation for the creation of humankind is relationship, both with the Almighty (Genesis 3:8) and with each other (Genesis 2:22-24).

Therefore, the deliberate development of a model which enables a depth of relationship between peoples created by God must be worthwhile, as well as driving those relationships towards the goal of reconciliation.

iv) Reconciliation

Drawing on the research, the definition of reconciliation emerged as ‘the restoration of relationship, after enmity, that enables both individuals and communities to live in peace and harmony with themselves and each other’. The aim of reconciliation is peace and harmony, applied both internally and externally, and this model provides opportunities for participants to experience this. Indeed, it is hard to envisage the growth of the external without the internal dimension having been experienced. Inevitably, this is an ongoing process and, at times, reconciliation fails, in both internal and external dimensions; but the model provides the framework that will enable the restoration of reconciliation, because it is built upon open, honest and respectful relationships.

Theologically, the Apostle Paul considers that reconciliation has happened between the Almighty and humanity, who were at odds, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:10); and Jesus is clear that being

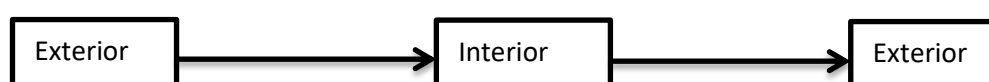
reconciled with an enemy is a condition for being reconciled with God (Matthew 5:24). This model provides the opportunity to be reconciled with those who are different, even if not overtly enemies.

Having extrapolated the new definition, there are a number of important recommendations that I wish to make concerning the practice of interfaith dialogue, drawn from both my own experience and the consideration of others:

- there is an urgency in the need for 'real' dialogue in the light of political developments around the world. It is my opinion that the next hundred years or so will be dominated by the questions of different religions seeking to live together.
- the quality of the relationships within dialogue to be such that mutual respect and honesty is enabled (the 'golden rule', "to love your neighbour as yourself" (Mark 12:31) which Armstrong interprets as "Always treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself" (Armstrong, 2011, p. 1-2).
- the I-Thou (You) model of engagement is crucial (Buber, 1937 & 1955).
- the need for a 'level playing field' – an equality which at least suspends the desire to win over the other.
- an ability to listen with empathy, springing from a desire to understand the other.
- an honesty that brings things out into the open, knowing that what is said may offend, but not deliberately (see appendix 2).
- this engagement must be inclusive – women's place is vital, bringing a new and different perspective into the frame. It is noted that intrafaith dialogue still remains a hope as both Christians and Muslims find their internal struggles producing civil wars; in the case of Islam, and for Christians, divisions are leading to serious breakdowns of relationships, and even splits in denominations (O'Neill, 1990) .

Every dialogic engagement must arise out of a genuine spirit of compassion (Armstrong, 2011) from all involved – for the Christian it means taking seriously Jesus’ command to “love your neighbour as yourself” (Matthew 22:39 (NIV)), while for the Muslim, to obey: “People, we created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should get to know one another” (Q. 49: 13 (al-Hujurat) (translation by MAS Abdel Haleem).

2. The journey participants travel through using this model



The Exterior encounters lead into Interior reflection before returning to Exterior encounters again, but now from a different place.

Stage 1 of the six-stage model starts with the exterior relationships, where participants meet as representatives of their respective religions. At times, the conversations seem defensive and guarded; each is dealing with the other as a religious person. At some point, there will be an epiphany moment when someone bravely opens themselves up by asking a previously unspoken question, or facing an uncomfortable truth. For one group, it was the question of conversion, and the motive behind being in the group, while for another it was the shared experience of being away from their natural communities, all vulnerable, seeking security in each other. Interestingly, for this group, it was a walk in the hills of the Yorkshire Dales that provided the epiphany moment, breaking exterior walls that individuals had put up around themselves.

Without such epiphany moments, it is hard to envisage the group moving from stage 1 to stage 2, where the barriers are down. Trust and honesty grow, enabling the exploration of both exterior and interior issues. Identities are considered, individual and corporate, personal and national histories are explored, and honest consideration given to respective religions, strengths and

weaknesses. Inevitably, this raises challenges, and gradually the individual participant travels inward as they reflect upon themselves as religious people, along with their national and ethnic heritage and the formative influences in their lives. This will take them into stage 3, which is an interior experience, reflecting upon themselves, what they have already experienced and asking whether they are prepared to continue with the journey. If and when they return is an individual decision, often another epiphany moment.

The importance of stage 3 cannot be over-emphasised, Munayer in his interview is at pains to point out the significance of this stage. This was the experience of those in the groups, especially the Turkish Dialogue Group. It was my own experience of withdrawal that, with hindsight, was very significant in my own journey. Therefore there is a triangulation (Munayer, experience of participants, my personal experience) of factors which point to the importance of stage 3 'withdrawal'.

Returning into stage 4 leads to a rediscovery of identity, a reshaped identity, which is then able to drive the process forward into asking the exterior questions concerning peace and reconciliation. Stages 5 and 6 then take the participant forward, asking how what they have learnt can be applied more widely into their communities and society in general.

The journey from external to internal and then back to the external has resonances with ideas of 'Liminality' as developed by van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1969) who, from an anthropological perspective, explored rites of passage, involving change in the participants, especially in their social status. Arnold van Gennep published *Rites of Passage* in 1907, where he identified a three-fold structure to rituals; "marking, helping or celebrating individual or collective passages through the cycle of life or of nature (which) exist in every culture" (van Gennep, p.21). The stages he established are: preliminal rites, liminal rites and postliminal rites. Coming across van Gennep's work in the early 1960s, Victor Turner published *Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period of Rites of Passage* in 1967, which began a process of applying liminality

beyond the rites of passage into both formal rituals and everyday life experiences, critical life stages, such as marriage, becoming a parent, revolutions, war and migration. Liminality is a part of life where profound change takes place; it is when a person goes through these three stages: before, during and after an experience, when they have undergone a change that affects the rest of their lives, from which there is no going back. Within the Christian context, the most obvious ritual is baptism which, especially if performed as full immersion, symbolises a person (often an adult) preparing, possibly over a long period, then entering the water and going under the water, symbolising death (Romans 6:4), only to be raised out of the water as a new person, a recognised 'Christian', never to be the same again. This sequence provides an understanding of what is happening in the six-stage cycle of reconciliation, as participants allow the process to bring about change in them. Stages 1 and 2 of the cycle can be seen as pre-liminal, where a 'separation' is developed, and preparation for the significant stage 3, as they enter a kind of liminal stage of personal crisis and self-reflection.

The stages beyond this period of crisis then form a post-liminal shared experience of a group that has passed through something formative, with a commonality of belonging – something akin to what Turner describes as 'communitas' (Turner, 1969).

The concept of liminality has been significantly developed since Turner's *Betwixt and Between* essay, giving it a wider application. Turner's approach was criticised for its limited application to small-scale tribal societies, and for attributing univocally positive connotation to liminal situations, seeing them as ways of renewal (Horvath, 2013). It is argued that the term can be applied to concrete historical events, thereby providing a means for a deeper historical and sociological understanding. Periods of uncertainty, transition, anguish and crisis can all be considered liminal. Some consider the uncertainty of post-modern society makes it a liminal age (Thomassen, 2014, p.9). Thomassen maintains that the post-liminal stage is vital for a return to 'normality':

Without a return to normality and background structures that can be taken for granted (at least until they are shaken again), individuals go crazy and societies become pathological. Human life ceases to be meaningful in perpetual liminality. And yet... that is exactly what happened in one specific transition, the one that lies at the heart of social theorizing: the transition to modernity (Thomassen, 2016).

For many of the participants in the dialogue groups, their experience of being either first-generation migrants or from a migrant heritage put them into a liminal place, being 'betwixt and between'. For Christians, described as 'foreigners and exiles' (1 Peter 2:11), whose home is considered to be in heaven, the tension of "being in the world but not of the world" (John 17:15-16), necessitates living in an on-going liminal place. For the Muslim, who considers this world to be a test in preparation for the next world (Q. 29:2-3, 87:16-17), a liminality rests over their life. This shared place of liminality gives a sense of solidarity that developed in the groups.

That, coupled with the shared experience of Withdrawal (stage 3) and return, as a post-liminal experience, gave a common identity and a sense of community. Then, as the participants met together they entered this 'communitas', a community of shared common experience, through a rite of passage (stage 3 of the cycle), and are transformed to varying degrees by their engagement. They have been through a formative experience, made significant decisions to re-enter the group and have been changed through the process. They are different people, and engage with the group in new ways, with a renewed depth of trust and willingness to travel into new dialogue places. Stage 3 has acted as a 'rite of passage' – a liminal rite, through which the participant has journeyed into a new place, a new status, a deeper understanding and a fresh sense of adventure as the group, the 'communitas', explores deeper interfaith engagement. Interestingly, commitment to the Turkish Dialogue group has remained constant for the last three years, and when an individual misses a meeting there is both a sense of loss by the individual and also the group feels a space within it. A number of significant

changes have happened. The participants view themselves and the others differently – there is flattening out of social status – the liminal experience (stage 3) has given a commonality, a depth of concern and care for other participants and I suspect a stronger desire to enable others to experience the journey that they have taken, although it is too early to be confident of this.

This element of ‘communitas’ expresses something of the deeper and more existential dimensions of my model of dialogue, as reconciliation provides for its participants over and against the other models I have reviewed.

3. What is distinctive about this model?

Already identified is this process of exterior-interior-exterior with its liminal expression in stage 3 leading into the communitas that follows. The post-liminal stages provide opportunity to consider how the re-shaped identity views the world differently, and then to address the issues that prevent reconciliation within individuals and communities.

The Musalaha model is distinctive in that it is holistic, as identified in the analysis – the Global themes. The following four points provide emphasis to its holistic nature.

i) The model is a cycle which expects the participants, once they have reached stage 6, to develop new groups with which they will embark on new adventures through the six stages. Alternatively the initial group might draw others into it, some returning after stage 3, or possibly those completely new to the model, although this has still to be tested.

ii) The model is deliberately designed for those of deep conviction and commitment to their respective religions. Personal devotion to their religion (faith) provides the common purpose, and this model gives space for believers of different levels of commitment to express their beliefs honestly and openly. Inevitably, this will be a challenging experience and participants are required to listen to and respect alternative views with which they disagree, sometimes

profoundly. It provides natural 'withdrawal' moments, where those not wishing to continue, for a variety of reasons, can leave.

iii) The three research groups that formed the basis of the research all came from different demographics. The model can be used in a range of different demographic contexts, providing a framework where facilitators can fashion the content of gatherings, allowing possibly problematic issues such as language and intra-faith differences in tradition to be dealt with appropriately.

The Turkish Dialogue Group was made up of well-educated Muslims and Christians, a number holding academic posts, or studying for post-graduate degrees. It was perhaps the easiest group with which to work through the cycle. The Catalyst Group was made up of 18-30 year-old British Muslims, many of whom came from communities described as segregated (Cantle, 2001 and Casey, 2016). It is these communities, in towns like Oldham, that are causing the most concern to those exploring the state of community cohesion in the UK. Likewise, the Priests-Imams Group involved Muslim leaders from areas of exactly that demographic. Although slower than the other groups in progressing around the cycle, this group continues into its sixth year, with relationships growing deeper. Another residential has been organised and the topics discussed are becoming more challenging. Further research with this group in three or four years' time could produce some interesting results.

iv) This model is flexible. While it can be used with demographically different groups, it also allows for groups to progress at their own appropriate speed. Each of the three groups travelled at different speeds and were at different places on the cycle when my research concluded. The model allows for this and when groups travel along a different route for a time, possibly leading them up a cul-de-sac, the model provides a road-map that enables them to return to a defined route. I suspect that one of the reasons the Priest-Imams Group proceeded at a slower pace was that every time there was a

religious festival (Eid, Milad, Christmas, Easter, Ramadan), the group would concentrate on the festival. Also, whenever a world event happened that affected the religious communities, the group would leave whatever subject was scheduled to discuss these events. Sadly, there have been too many such events over the last five years. However, it was the depth of engagement in the group that enabled such issues to be considered.

Adaptation of the Musalaha model for the UK

While this research is indebted to Salim Munayer's Musalaha six-stage model of reconciliation, the context of the UK has inevitably produced adaptations of the model. The Musalaha model grew out of a context of intense and on-going conflict in Israel/Palestine, where two communities have lived at enmity for almost 70 years, with the inevitable growth of myths and rumours that reinforce their mutual hatred. The strategic and political objectives of governments to cause separation between Israelis and Palestinians, and the structural evidence of a wall erected between Israel and its neighbours, mean that encounters of the kind that produced the model carry significant risks. This is not the situation in the UK, although there are pressures, both personal and within communities, that could mitigate against such engagement.

Within all the communities, there are elements of fear of the other. However it was the conviction of the believers in their respective religions and the sense of confident enquiry that enabled much of the preliminary group work to be moved through quickly and easily. Both the Turkish Dialogue and the Catalyst Groups, made up of people educated in the UK, moved on to stage 2 more quickly and easily than the Priests and Imams Group, which was made up of Muslim leaders educated in the Indian sub-continent. In the UK, there are well-practised methods of engagement which were utilised to develop the groups – meetings for better understanding and especially Scriptural Reasoning methods that gave stage 1 a structure and direction, building confidence and trust to proceed to further stages.

The process through stage 2 followed the Musalaha model with most of the topics covered, although the order of the topics was not followed exactly. The discretion of the leader was required to enable the groups to follow the directions in which the group was naturally heading, although all the topics were covered. It was at stage 3 that the process was different. Withdrawal was not planned or deliberately executed – it just happened. The sessions that Musalaha includes in this stage were transferred to stage 4, when some people had returned, such as sessions on power and forgiveness. The session on dealing with trauma was not used, although available if required.

Stages 4, 5 and 6 followed roughly the same topics as given by the Musalaha model, although again the order differed, allowing the leader to access whatever topic was appropriate for a particular meeting. The one group involved in the research that had moved into these stages considered the topics with fruitful engagement. It showed that the boundaries between stages 5 and 6 are not clear, with issues considered part of stage 6 being discussed as other issues from stage 5 were still in progress. This, however, reflected that the group was naturally moving from one stage to another. It is therefore imperative that the facilitator is sensitive to the speed and direction of the group. The model is flexible enough to enable groups to travel at their own pace and take their own route on the journey to the common destination of 'lived-out' reconciliation. The Turkish Dialogue Group that is hovering somewhere between stages 5 and 6 is already considering how it can take its common experience into other contexts. The degree of reconciliation that this group has experienced will provide it with both a model and an incentive to engage with other interfaith groups developing at a similar depth. The effect of this will, inevitably, produce greater community cohesion as people of different religions engage at such depth, seek to understand each other, and develop relationships that transform their lives and in turn affect others' lives.

It should be noted that the syllabus provided (Appendix 1) is a suggestion. In practice the facilitator is free to choose the topic, as he/she considers appropriate for the session. It provides a framework so that if groups explore

new directions they can return to the cycle, at the appropriate time. The syllabus need not to be followed strictly, but rather giving suggestions of possible topics to aid the process around the cycle. It should be noted that none of the research groups were aware of the six-stage cycle, with its suggested topics. Subsequent to the research some members of the groups have asked concerning the research, whereupon I have shared the six-stage cycle with them. Their general comment has been, 'that makes sense'.

Conclusion

My new model provides a framework for such engagement by committed members of their respective religions, where a person's faith can be expressed with passion and integrity, while enabling relationships of depth and commitment to develop. On-going terrorist attacks and a significant growth in reported incidents of Islamophobia, as this thesis is being completed, reinforce the imperative for more interfaith engagement. This research demonstrates that even in some of the most sensitive areas, where segregation remains a challenge, depth of relationship between peoples of different religions can be developed among leaders, which provides a model for others within their communities to follow. This six-stage cycle of reconciliation is an important resource alongside others, mentioned in chapter 2, which will facilitate growth in the personal faith of participants, develop an understanding between different religions, and thereby enhance the cohesion of marginalised communities in the UK.

Appendix 1 - Syllabus for Interfaith Dialogue

Stage One – Beginning Relationships

- Setting the ground rules
 - o Principles of Ethical dialogue (Christian-Muslim Forum guidelines).
 - o Conflict – Inevitable – handling it.
 - o Listening – principles – guidelines.
 - o Aims of dialogue – reconciliation – consensus on common aim.
- Topics to be covered
 - o various Prophets – Abraham, David/Dawood, Noah/Nur, and others.
 - o How we view our scriptures.
- Methods:
 - o Scriptural Reasoning.
 - o Topical discussion.
 - o Meetings for better understanding.
- Aim:
 - o To build trust and understanding, getting to know each other's faith positions.

Stage Two – Opening up

- Identity – main components of identity – social, personal etc., who am I? What defines me? What influences form me?
- Managing difference/conflict – Living with diversity, conflict management, resolution and transformation.
- History and Narrative. Good and bad histories – how do we live with bad history? Bridging the gap: Narrative and History in conflict.
- Obstacles to Reconciliation – physical, emotional, spiritual.
 - o Prejudice.
 - o Racism/Islamophobia.

- (Possibly – Theological differences – Explore Christian and Muslim views of history and reconciliation).

Stage Three – Withdrawal

- Power – Imbalance.
- Forgiveness – what it is and what is not..... (probably at least two sessions).
- (Possibly if appropriate – Dealing with Trauma – Grief, loss – physical, emotional , psychological etc).
- (possibly if appropriate - Healing – models of healing, breaking cycles of violence).

Stage Four – Reclaiming Identity

- Reclaiming identity – who am I in relationship with the others?
 - o how do I view others?
 - o learning to embrace the other.
- Remembering Rightly – history revisited.
 - o the importance of memory and its shortcomings.
 - o remembrance and non-remembrance.

Stage Five – Committing and Returning

- Dealing with discouragement.
 - o in it for the long-haul.
 - o models of perseverance.
- Justice.
 - o in our scriptures – what is it?
 - o Different aspects of justice.
- Reconciliation.
 - o with God/Allah, - remorse, repentance and forgiveness.
 - o with ourselves – forgiveness.
 - o with others – remorse, restitution.

Stage Six – Taking Steps

- Justice and Reconciliation – Justice.
 - what must we do to make it happen?
 - active reconciliation.
- Change – how to bring it about.
 - in society.
 - Personal.
- Where do we go from here? (Back to stage 1)
 - Enlarge the group – new people.
 - Divide the group and draw in others.
 - Initiate new groups using the model.

Appendix 2 - Christian Muslim Forum

Ethical Guidelines for Christian and Muslim Witness in Britain

As members of the Christian Muslim Forum we are deeply committed to our own faiths (Christianity and Islam) and wish to bear faithful witness to them. As Christians and Muslims we are committed to working together for the common good. We recognise that both communities actively invite others to share their faith and acknowledge that all faiths have the same right to share their faith with others. There are diverse attitudes and approaches amongst us which can be controversial and raise questions. This paper is not a theology of Christian evangelism or mission or Da'wah (invitation to Islam), rather it offers guidelines for good practice.

The Christian Muslim Forum offers the following suggestions that, we hope, will equip Christians and Muslims (and others) to share their faith with integrity and compassion for those they meet.

- 1) We bear witness to, and proclaim our faith not only through words but through our attitudes, actions and lifestyles.
- 2) We cannot convert people, only God can do that. In our language and methods we should recognise that people's choice of faith is primarily a matter between themselves and God.
- 3) Sharing our faith should never be coercive; this is especially important when working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Everyone should have the choice to accept or reject the message we proclaim and we will accept people's choices without resentment.
- 4) Whilst we might care for people in need or who are facing personal crises, we should never manipulate these situations in order to gain a convert.
- 5) An invitation to convert should never be linked with financial, material or other inducements. It should be a decision of the heart and mind alone.
- 6) We will speak of our faith without demeaning or ridiculing the faiths of others.
- 7) We will speak clearly and honestly about our faith, even when that is uncomfortable or controversial.
- 8) We will be honest about our motivations for activities and we will inform people when events will include the sharing of faith.

9) Whilst recognising that either community will naturally rejoice with and support those who have chosen to join them, we will be sensitive to the loss that others may feel.

10) Whilst we may feel hurt when someone we know and love chooses to leave our faith, we will respect their decision and will not force them to stay or harass them afterwards.

(www.christianmuslimforum.org/downloads/Ethical_Guidelines_for_Witness.pdf)

Appendix 3



Dear ,

**University of Chester: 'Beyond Dialogue' - An exploration of the relevance of the
Musalaha Curriculum of Reconciliation model of interfaith dialogue for the UK.**

This letter is to invite you to take part in some research which I'm involved with, considering how Christian-Muslim relations develop in the U.K., and especially looking at the direction they might take in the future. I am particularly concerned with the process of dialogue between people of different faiths, and what happens beyond the initial stages of gaining mutual understanding of what we hold in common and where we differ.

I've come across a remarkable project in Israel/Palestine where for more than 25 years groups of Israeli Jews, Palestinian Muslims and Palestinian Christians have been spending time together in the desert exploring issues of reconciliation between their embittered communities. The research I wish to undertake involves asking if the principles of the programme developed out of this project – Musalaha: Cycle of Reconciliation (Musalaha means 'reconciliation' in Arabic) are transferable to the context in the United Kingdom. I'll be asking what we can learn from this programme which can help in the relationships between people of different faiths and backgrounds. This will involve spending time interviewing the director of the project, and then sharing in a Musalaha programme in Israel/Palestine, but also reflecting on the two groups I'm involved with in Oldham – the Priests-Imams group and the Catalyst young adults group. It is in these groups that it will be seen how the Musalaha principles are explored in the UK context.

It is hoped that this research can make a contribution to the growing necessity for people of different faiths and heritage to grow in understanding and engagement, in the UK, by developing a process that enables a depth of relationships to be maintained.

If you be willing to be involved in this research it is understood that you are free to withdraw from it at any stage.

Please think carefully about whether you can join in this research, and let me know if you need any further information.

Please don't hesitate to contact me on tel: 07743 734425 or email – philjr053@gmail.com

Thank you for reading this and I looking to working with you in this research.

Yours Phil Rawlings (Doctor of Professional Studies in Practical Theology student)

Appendix 4

An exploration of the *Musalaha: Curriculum of Reconciliation* model of interfaith dialogue with relevance for the UK context.

I'd like to ask you to take part in a research study that I'm involved in. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with others if you like. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

The 2011 census indicated that about 5% of the population in the UK identify themselves as Muslims. Areas, especially in the inner-city areas of major cities and the northern towns, have significantly higher proportions of Muslim communities living in them, and some of these have been identified as becoming segregated, isolated and engaging very poorly with society in general. Relationships between Christians and Muslim in the UK have been developing over the last 20 years, in a variety of ways, with inter-faith dialogue becoming a popular way for peoples of different faiths to build relationships and to gain an understanding of each other. This research will explore the process of dialogue and asks what happens when interfaith groups have established healthy and creative relationships over some time, which have enabled the growth of mutual understanding of commonality and of difference. It will then ask how these relationships might develop into the future, 'beyond dialogue'. This question arises out of my personal experience having been involved in a number of such groups, which are now asking this question. Recently I came across the work of the 'Musalaha' Programme in Israel/Palestine, which for over 25 year has pioneered interfaith dialogue between Israeli Jews, Palestinian Muslims and Palestinian Christians. The research asks to what extent the principles of the 'cycle of reconciliation' developed by Musalaha are transferrable to the situation in the United Kingdom. The aim is to provide a model of building relationships between Christians and Muslims in the UK which enables growth beyond many of the stages experienced at present.

The research will be carried out with three groups: 1. Interviews with the director followed by a visit to observe the Musalaha programme in Israel/Palestine. 2. Continuing the Priest-Imams group in Oldham and exploring the growing friendships between the Muslim and Christian leaders. 3. Developing a group which continues to grow in its relationships out of the successful Catalyst weekend programme for young adults from Muslim, Christian and Hindu heritages.

It is hoped that this research could well be published, at some stage.

If you wish to complain or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please contact:

Prof. Robert Warner, Dean of Humanities, University of Chester, Chester CH1 4BJ
Tel. 01244 511980 Thanks for reading this.

Phil Rawlings D. Prof Student – University of Chester

24th May 2014

Appendix 5 Consent Form

Title of Project: 'Beyond Dialogue' - An exploration of the relevance of the *Musalaha Curriculum of Reconciliation* model of interfaith dialogue for the UK.

Name of Researcher: Philip J. Rawlings

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet, dated 24th May 2014, for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my care or legal rights being affected.
3. I agree to take part in the above study.

☐☐☐

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature

_____	_____	_____
Name of Person taking consent (if different from researcher)	Date	Signature

_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

Appendix 6 - 14 Tables – Codes to Basic Themes

Table 1 - Faith

Codes to Basic Themes - Faith		
Codes	Issues Discussed	Basic Themes Identified
Faith (PIS 1) Faith (PIS 2) Faith (PIS 3) Faith (PIS 4) Faith (CGW1) Faith (CGW2) Religion (CGW3) Religion (CGW4) Faith (TDG 1)	Priest/Imam/Minister Faith-relationships Islam Christianity Church Mosque Qur'an Law of God God/Allah Non-Muslims People of Faith Hindu – Karma/incarnation, demi-gods, sacred animals. Prophet/companions Interfaith Dialogue Kingdom of God Sunni Shia Jewish Festivals	<p>Faith is a major theme and the distinctive commonality of this research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is a <u>core value to the research</u>. - All the groups identified it as significant as motivation and common ground for dialogue - <u>Three faiths</u> engaged in dialogue, although most Christian-Muslim - <u>Jews</u> mentioned in passing. - All three groups involved in both <u>understanding and critiquing</u> each other's faiths.

Table 2 – Religion

Codes to Basic Themes - Religion		
Codes	Issues Discussed	Basic Themes Identified
Religion (CGW3) Religion (CGW4) Faith (TDG 1) Religion (TDG 2) Religion (TDG 4) Religion (TDG 5) (TDG 6) (TDG 7) (TDG 8) Post-Faith (PIS 4) Outsider (PIS1) (TDG 6)	Atheist Secular Non-Muslim Ex-Muslim Minority Marginalisation Poor Immigrants Foreign Alien Stranger	<u>Religion</u> was recognised - includes <u>post-faith</u> ex-Muslim, lapsed Christians (someone with belief but disillusioned), atheist, leaving their heritage-faith. - Includes consideration of <u>practice</u> – festivals, interfaith dialogue (considering different cultures, etc), - Views of <u>application</u> of different religions in the world - Kingdom of God or Khalifate etc. - Faith a <u>branch of Religion</u> , but separate.

Table 3 –Institutions

Codes to Basic Themes - Institutions		
Codes	Issues Discussed	Basic Themes Identified
The State (PIS 1) (PIS 2) (TDG 4) (TDG 7) (TDG 8) Authority (TDG7) Rights (PIS 2) Society (PIS 3) (PIS 4) (TDG 2) (TDG 5) (TDG 7) (TDG 8)	Government State Law of the Land Nation Politics Media/Press Power Control Secular Government Rules Power Society Institution Politically	<u>Institutions</u> – seemed to play a major thematic role. - The <u>State</u> – government, Law court enforcing the Law of the Land, the Police, Army etc. - <u>Religious</u> institutions – Mosques (particularly if part of movement – UKIM, Minhaj al Qadri, Salafi etc.). C of E, RC, Methodist etc. <i>Swaminarayan & other Hindu sects.</i> - <u>Media</u> was recognised as exercising great power on behalf of the state. - <u>Education</u> – schools - <u>Health Service</u> (NHS)

Table 4 – The State

Codes to Basic Themes – The State		
Codes	Issues Discussed	Basic Themes Identified
The State (PIS 1) (PIS 2) (TDG 4) (TDG 7) (TDG 8) Authority (TDG7) Rights(PIS 2)	Multicultural Difference Other nationalities Labelling Stereotyping Human Rights Citizens Politicians Schools/education Equality Free Speech Class Media Power Justice Control Leaders Democracy Coercive Balance/imbalance Right/wrong Family/children Citizen Marriage Different Community Identity Integrated Fitting in	The State as a separate theme with overlap with previous theme (Institutions). - <u>Citizens</u> , - <u>Authorities</u> , leaders, power, control, government, etc. - <u>Society</u> and its <u>values</u> : democracy, free speech, equality, secular, freedom, multicultural, rights, justice. - <u>Negative</u> aspects identified: stereotyping, class, difference, labelling, coercive power. - <u>Human Rights</u> – legal framework – international.

Table 5 – Nationality

Codes to Basic Themes – Nationality		
Codes	Issues Discussed	Basic Themes Identified
Nationality(PIS 4) (CGW 1) (TDG 2) (TDG 4)	Britain Other countries Language Western	<u>Nationality</u> was a major theme: - <u>Heritage</u> nation – Pakistan, India, Turkey played significant part in dialogue. - <u>Host (adopted) nation</u> – Britain – present identity. - <u>Hybrid nationality</u> – British Pakistani, British Asian – British with Turkish heritage..... - <u>Language</u> is important issue – English, non-English languages (Urdu, Gujarati, Turkish....) - <u>Perceived powerful nations</u> : America, European (Germany/France) - <u>Western</u> (as alternative to Eastern culturally) - <u>Negative aspects</u> : foreign, alien, visa, passport, Home Office etc.
Where am I? (CGW2) (CGW 3) (TDG 5) (TDG 6) (TDG 8)	State Country/place Sub-continent Continent. World Heritage Ottomans European (British/French) American Foreign Alien	

Table 6 – Belonging

Codes to Basic Themes – Belonging		
Codes	Issues Discussed	Basic Themes Identified
Belonging (PIS 3) (PIS 4) (CGW 3) (CGW 4) (TDG 6)	Family/children Citizen Marriage Different Community Identity Integrated Fitting in	<u>Belonging</u> was major theme: - <u>Family</u> – siblings, parents, extended – transcontinental family etc..... - <u>Friendships</u> – within ethnic group and especially outside. - <u>Community</u> – local, transnational, nuclear, extended. - <u>Marriage</u> – at the heart of community and family. - <u>Community identity</u> – fitting in, local and national, and transnational. - Integration within wider community - <u>Negative</u> – not-belonging – alien, foreign

Table 7 – Human Condition

Codes to Basic Themes – Human Condition		
Codes	Issues Discussed	Basic Themes Identified
Human Condition (CGW 1) (TDG7)	Body/soul Fairness Vulnerability Choice/Free will Personality Relationships Forgiveness	<u>Human Condition</u> discussion of the different religions inevitably revolved around how we see humankind: - <u>Body-soul</u> divide – major issue for Hindus - Issues of the <u>future</u> – Heaven/hell, karma & reincarnation, human form... - Different views of <u>creation</u> . - Need for <u>relationships</u> ... - <u>Vulnerability</u> /weakness - <u>Individual</u> freewill, personality & character. - <u>Different</u> – distinctive – unique

Table 8 – Evils

Codes to Basic Themes – Evils		
Codes	Issues Discussed	Basic Themes Identified
Not Good (CGW 4) (TDG 3) (TDG 7) (TDG 8) Discrimination Dangers/Negatives (TG2)	Evil/bad Relationship Human form Different Good Violence Terrorism Attack Wrong Sins Pain Unjust Hurts Bad history Guilt Destroy Evil Abuse Barriers Stereotyping Hypocrisy Trouble Injustices Difference Scary Fear Problems Hatred Difference Prejudices Wrong Extremism Religious Practice	Evils – dangers, barriers, obstacles were identified by all the groups: - <u>Social</u> evils – prejudice, injustices, hypocrisy, unjust, bad history, difference, stereotyping, abuse, offending ... - <u>Personal</u> evils – individual sins, fear, scared, guilt, hurts, past mistakes, abuse, personal offence. - <u>Threats</u> – national – terrorism, ISIS, - General <u>obstacles</u> – problems, threats, barriers, troubles, disagreements... - <u>Relationships</u> – gone wrong, breakdown...

Table 9 – The Outsider

Codes to Basic Themes – The Outsider		
Codes	Issues Discussed	Basic Themes Identified
Outsider (PIS1) (TDG 6)	Minority Marginalisation Poor Immigrants Foreign Alien Stranger	<p>The <u>Outsider</u> – the groups expressed an understanding for those who are ‘outside’.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the <u>minorities</u> – not engaged – by choice or not... - the <u>marginalised</u> through personality, health, heritage, deliberately or not... - <u>Immigrants</u> – seeking sanctuary or a better life. - the <u>Poor</u> – unable to access the wealth and advantages of being in Britain. - the <u>Stranger</u> – without a community. - the <u>foreigner</u> or alien – as described by the State or society.

Table 10 – Inner-life

Codes to Basic Themes – Inner-life		
Codes	Issues Discussed	Basic Themes Identified
Faith lived out (CGW2) Inner life/Spiritual (CGW2)	Spirit/soul Punishment/Hell Sin/evil Salvation Motive/Intention	<p>The <u>Inner-life</u> – the spiritual side of the person.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Sin</u>, guilt, forgiveness, restoration of relationship etc... - <u>God/Allah</u> – prayer, relationship, awareness - <u>Motivation</u> and intention – what drives us? - <u>Salvation</u> and the future – heaven & hell.

Table 11 – Emotions

Codes to Basic Themes – Emotions-Feelings		
Codes	Issues Discussed	Basic Themes Identified
Feelings/Emotions (CGW4)	Change Pressure Different Inappropriate Anger Unforgiveness Pain Hurts	<p><u>Emotions – feelings</u></p> <p>played an important part especially in the TG's. As a driver in our lives emotions are very powerful:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <u>Difference</u> came out in almost all groups - <u>Change</u> – fear of, enjoyment of.... - <u>Fear – scary</u> – as an inhibitor of engagement. - <u>Inappropriate</u> – sense of something 'not right'..... - <u>Pressure</u> – sense of under pressure from different places – perceived pressure ... - <u>Anger</u> – both justifiable anger at social ills, but personal anger after being offended, or as a result of abuse - <u>Pain</u> – physical, emotional, hurts both self-inflicted and inflicted by others.

Table 12 – Who am I?

Codes to Basic Themes – Who am I?		
Codes	Issues Discussed	Basic Themes Identified
Identity (who am I?) (CGW 3) (TDG 1) (TDG 3) (TDG 4) (TDG 5) (TDG 6)	Character Family Language Worldview Country Hizmet Nationality (Turkish) History/narrative Culture Difference Friendships Distinctive Social category Labels	Who am I? Discussions always came back to this issue on both personal and corporate identity issues. - Every dialogue includes issues of <u>identity</u> ... - <u>Personal</u> identity – personality, character, education, worldview, where belong (hybrid personal identity), friendships, personal history, nationality – passport, Distinctive & difference..... - <u>Social</u> identity – nationality (Turkish, Pakistani etc.), family, clan, biradari/caste, Hizmet (Turkish organisation), culture, history/narrative, Friendships, social category/class, labels... - <u>National</u> identity – British(!), Turkish, Pakistani, Indian, hybrid, where home? – Britain or sub-continent?

Table 13 – History

Codes to Basic Themes – History		
Codes	Issues Discussed	Basic Themes Identified
Narrative (TDG 2) (TDG 4) (TDG 5)	History Story-telling Memory Forebears Ancestors	History formed a strong issue that underlay much of the discussion: - <u>History forms us</u> – national identity and personal identity. - Much of history is actually <u>narratives</u> – not objective history!! - <u>Story-telling</u> as part of passing on history. - <u>Culture</u> is shaped by history

Table 14 – Forgiveness

Codes to Basic Themes – Forgiveness		
Codes	Issues Discussed	Basic Themes Identified
Forgiveness (TDG 2) (TDG 3) (TDG 5)	Remorse Peace Forgive Sorry Reconciliation Letting go Acknowledge Change (of heart/mind) Regret Apology Repent Guilt Restitution Truth and Reconciliation Compensation History Story-telling Memory Forebears Ancestors	Forgiveness – major theme for discussion, especially in the Turkish Group, but encountered obliquely in others (especially in discussions about religions): - Both <u>giving and receiving</u> : forgiveness is given and forgiveness is received. - <u>Change</u> of heart/mind – understanding and acknowledgement – something takes place(!) - The <u>individual</u> – faces themselves, their circumstance etc. – remorse, regret, feels sorry... - <u>Does something</u> – repentance, apology, sorry, - <u>Resulting in</u> : restitution,

		reconciliation, compensation, - <u>Leading to:</u> Letting go and peace. - <u>Social or corporate</u> forgiveness – Truth and Reconciliation Commission (South Africa)
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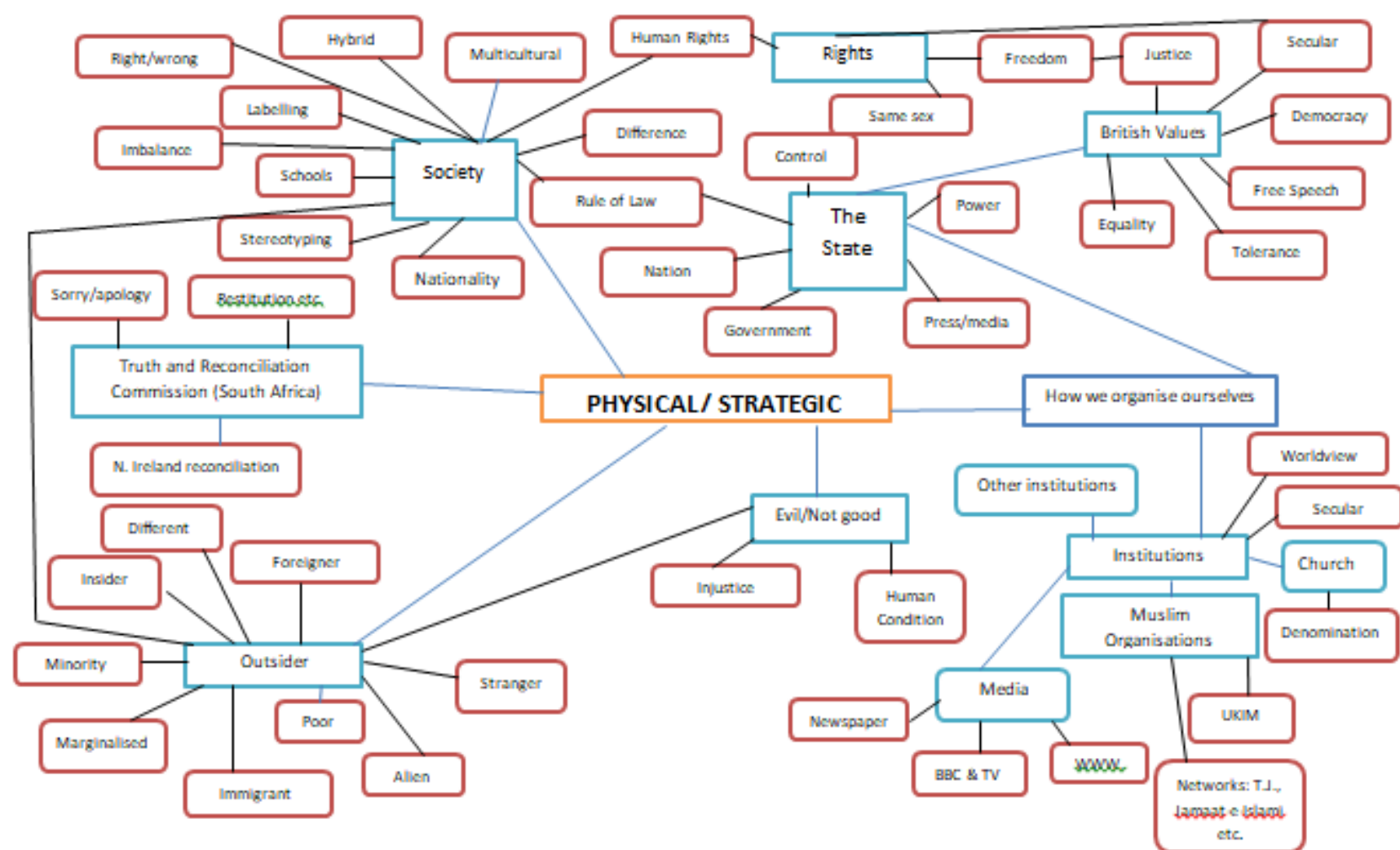
TDG – Turkish Dialogue Group

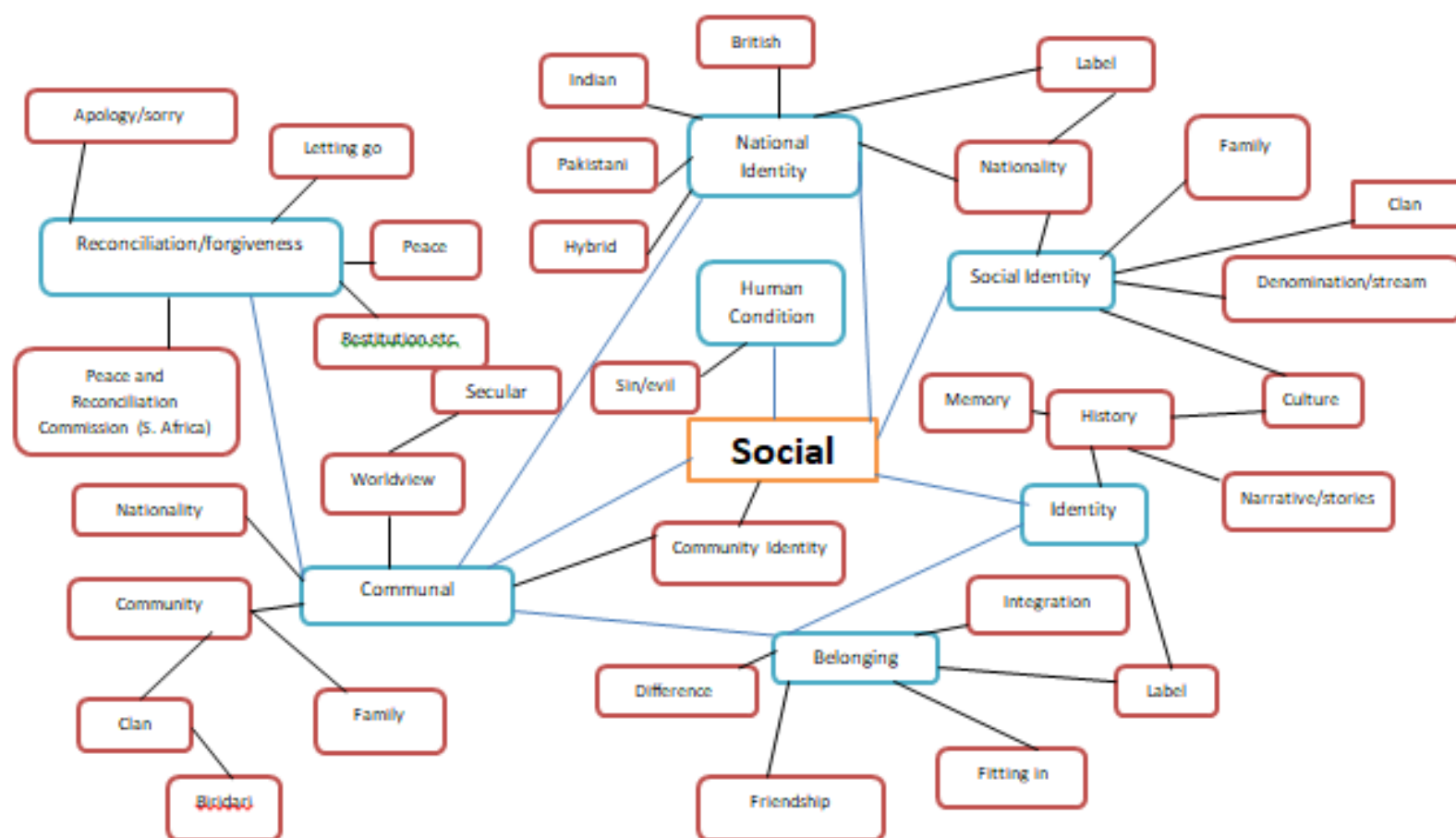
CGW – Catalyst Group Weekend

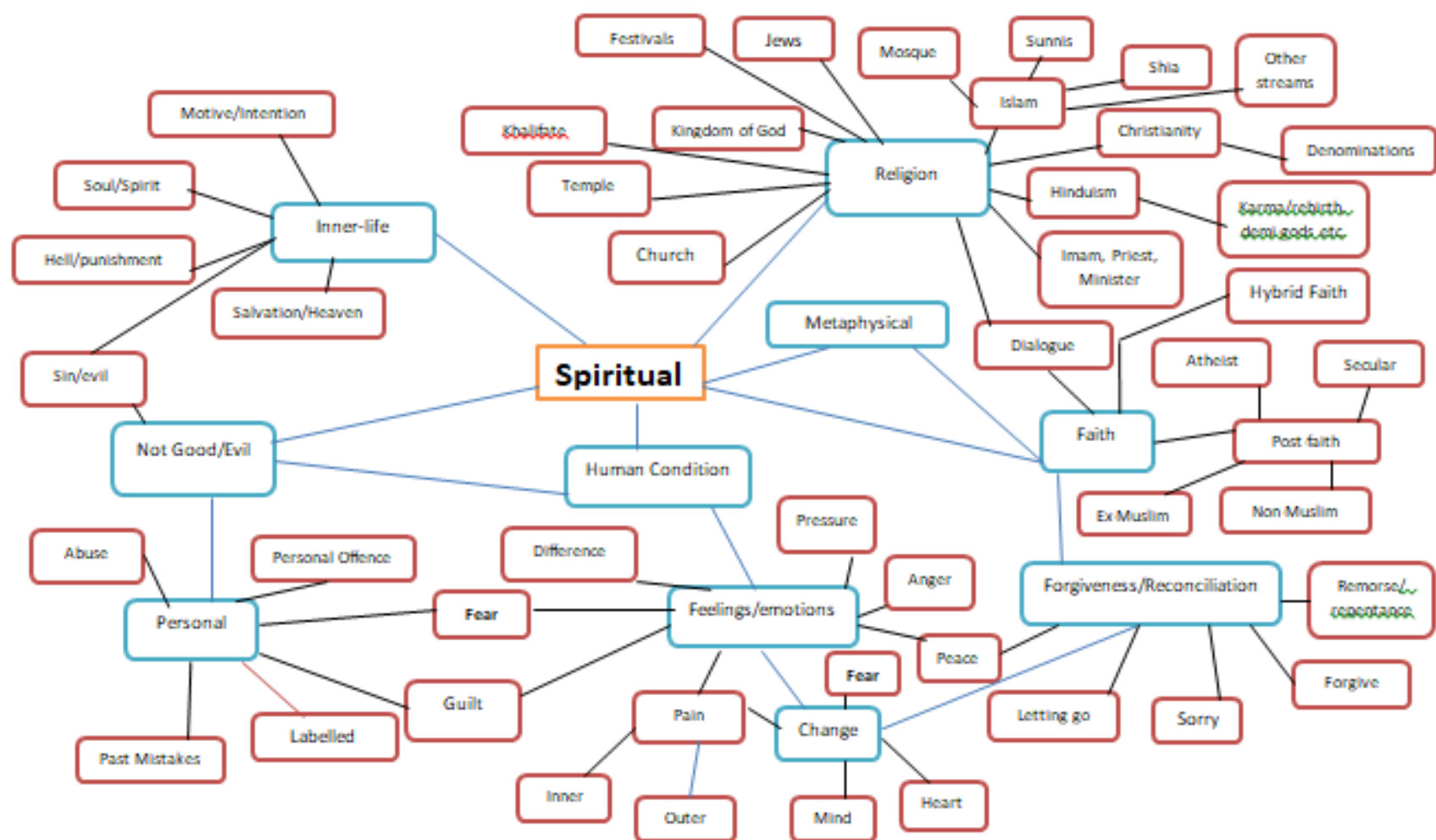
PIS - Priests and Imams Group

There is considerable overlap between the issues discussed from many of the codes which have been drawn into each Basic Theme. Hence the tables give an indication of the types of issues discussed which feed into the Basic Themes.

Appendix 7 Global Themes – Mapping Webs







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